Toward a Poetics of Animality: Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Pirandello, Kafka

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2014

Abstract

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Toward a Poetics of Animality is a study of the place and function of animals in the works of four major modernist authors: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Luigi Pirandello, and Franz Kafka. Through a series of close readings of canonical as well as lesser-known texts, I show how the so-called "Sprachkrise"—the crisis of language and representation that dominated European literature around 1900—was inextricably bound up with an attendant crisis of anthropocentrism and of man's relationship to the animal. Since antiquity, man has been defined as the animal that has language; hence a crisis of language necessarily called into question the assumption of human superiority and the strict division between humans and animals on the basis of language. Furthermore, in response to author and critic John Berger's provocative suggestion that "the first metaphor was animal," I explore the essential and constantly reaffirmed link between animals and metaphorical language. The implication is that the poetic imagination and the problem of representation have always on some level been bound up with the figure of the animal. Thus, the 'poetics of animality' I identify in the authors under examination gestures toward the origin of poetry and figurative language as such.

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Abbreviations

References to editions of authors' complete works are abbreviated as follows:

SW — Hugo von Hofmannsthal. *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*. Eds. Rudolf Hirsch, Edward Reichel, Christoph Perels, Mathias Mayer and Heinz Rölleke. 40 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1975–.

GW — Hugo von Hofmannsthal. *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*. Eds. Bernd Schoeller and Rudolf Hirsch. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986.

KKA — Franz Kafka. *Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe*. Kritische Ausgabe. Eds. Jürgen Born, Gerhard Neumann, Malcolm Pasley and Jost Schillemiet. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982–.

Individual volumes abbreviated as follows:

D	=	Drucke zu Lebzeiten
S	=	Das Schloß
NI	=	Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente I
NII	=	Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II
T	=	Tagebücher
B2	=	Briefe, 1913 – März 1914
B3	=	Briefe, April 1914 – 1917

References to the "Apparatband" accompanying each volume will be indicated by *App*. (e.g. KKAT *App*. 358)

WA — Rainer Maria Rilke. *Sämtliche Werke in zwölf Bänden*. Insel Werkausgabe. Eds. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Ernst Zinn. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1975.

HGA — Martin Heidegger. *Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975–.

KSA — Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. *Sämtliche Werke*. Kritische Studienausgabe. Eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. 15 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999.

Acknowledgements

Although writing this dissertation did at times make me feel “wie irgendein gänzlich von Menschen losgetrenntes Tier,” I could not have done it without all the help, support, and encouragement I received along the way, and for which I am very grateful.

I would first of all like to thank my advisors, Mark Anderson, Andreas Huyssen, and John Hamilton, who have all been very enthusiastic about the project from the beginning and have pushed me to isolate and engage more directly with the issues at the heart of this dissertation. I am also grateful to Eckart Goebel and Oliver Simons for their thoughtful and productive comments during and after the defence.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies at the Free University in Berlin, I was able to spend a full year in Germany, which was of immeasurable benefit to this project, especially because it allowed me to participate in a number of conferences and other animal-related events, such as the Cultural and Literary Animal Studies (CLAS) colloquium in Würzburg, organised by Roland Borgards, Alexander Kling, and Esther Köhring. The stimulating exchange of ideas and methodologies, and the rich and detailed feedback I received on my work there was invaluable to its further development.

I would also like to thank Tyler Whitney, whose thoughtful comments and criticisms have helped to make this dissertation infinitely better.

Special thanks go to my parents and sister Kate for their unending patience and support, and to Harry, who accompanied me on many a long walk as I pondered the question of the animal, and without whom I probably never would have begun to wonder about Malte Laurids Brigge's dogs in the first place. He was in many ways the inspiration for this long journey. Sadly, he did not live to see it completed.

And finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my wife Susanne. I cannot begin to say how her love, support, encouragement, patience, and criticism have helped me bring this project to completion. This dissertation is dedicated to her.

> The first subject matter for painting was animal. Probably the first paint was animal blood. Prior to that, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal.
>
> —John Berger, "Why Look at Animals"

Introduction

I. "Neue Dichtung vom Tiere"

Sometime around 1900, a fundamental shift occurred in the way animals were represented in works of Western literature, art, and philosophy. Authors began to write about animals in a way that was unheard-of or even unimaginable in previous epochs. Traditionally, animals had fulfilled a symbolic, allegorical, or satirical function. But in the period around the turn of the twentieth century these animals begin, as it were, to "misbehave" or to "resist" the metaphorical values attributed to them. There is a conspicuous abundance of animals in the literature of this period, and this animal presence is frequently characterised by a profound and troubling ambiguity, which is often more or less explicitly linked to the problem of writing, representation, and language—specifically poetic or metaphorical language.

In 1918, the Austrian literary scholar Oskar Walzel published an article entitled "Neue Dichtung vom Tiere" in which he too noted "eine nicht unbeträchtliche Verschiebung" in recent literary depictions of animals. "Uralte Gewohnheit der Fabel ist, vom Tiere zu reden und den Menschen zu meinen," Walzel wrote, citing as an example G. E. Lessing's treatise *Von dem Gebrauch der Tiere in der Fabel* (1759), which argued that animals serve as a sort of symbolic shorthand, since the "allgemein bekannten und unveränderlichen Charaktere der Tiere" (Lessing 1:93) make the moral

lesson of the fable far easier to grasp than the infinitely more varied and ambiguous characters of men. "In neuerer Zeit," Walzel continued, "wird das Tier um seiner selbst willen dichterisch erfaßt. Es soll nicht länger nur als bequemes Mittel dienen, in abgekürzter Form den Menschen zu versinnlichen. Es will sein eigenes Recht finden. Es möchte seine eigenen Leiden und Freuden zum Ausdruck gelangen lassen" (53). Walzel's diagnosis is limited to the symptoms of this seismic shift in the literary representation of animals. He cites numerous examples of works by contemporary French, German, and Scandinavian authors, but says little to nothing about what might account for this development. So what had changed?

Six years later, in 1924, Virginia Woolf famously asserted that "on or around December 1910, human character changed" (38). The somewhat hyperbolic precision of this assertion is a deliberately facetious comment on the inherent arbitrariness of any such strict periodisation. "I am not saying that one went out, as one might into a garden, and there saw that a rose had flowered, or that a hen had laid an egg," she wrote. "The change was not sudden and definite like that. But a change there was, nevertheless."

> All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, politics and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes in 1910. (38)

I would argue for placing it a decade earlier, and I would like to add a relationship to the list: humans and animals (including the putative hen in the hypothetical garden). In this dissertation I will examine the paradigm shift in the representation of animals in the literature of this period by means of an examination of the place and function

of animals in the works of four modernist authors: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Luigi Pirandello, and Franz Kafka. I locate these texts within a tradition of what I refer to as the poetics of animality—a tradition that, I argue, underwent a profound transformation in this period, which represents a turning point in mankind's relationship to animals in a number of different yet interconnected ways.

The industrialisation and mass urbanisation of European society that had occurred over the previous century meant that humans were now suddenly divorced from animal life in their everyday existence like never before. The establishment of the modern zoological garden and the rise in popularity of domestic pet-keeping may be seen as attempts to compensate for this, even as they serve as indicators of radically new parameters for human–animal interaction. At the same time, developments in the natural sciences—most importantly Darwin's formulation of the theory of evolution—coupled with Nietzsche's thoroughgoing critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism and Freud's mapping of the human subconscious, had given rise to a newly animalised conception of the human. This growing awareness of man's own animal nature did not, for the most part, bring man closer to other animals, however. On the contrary, paradoxical as it may seem, it frequently led to a greater perceived distance to the rest of the animal world. To be sure, there were those who enthusiastically embraced this new proximity to nature, such as the outspoken Austrian modernist Hermann Bahr, who, in 1909, published an exuberant essay in the *Neue Rundschau* entitled "Bücher der Natur," in which he welcomed the demise of the anthropocentric worldview:

> Der Mensch, bisher der Natur gegenüber, als ihr Zuschauer und ihr Herr, vor dem und für den das ganze Spiel der Welt geschieht, sah sich nun plötzlich in die Natur gerissen, mitten in sie hinein; er hatte gar nichts mehr für sich allein, und die Tiere, die Blumen, die Steine sollten nun seine Brüder und Schwestern sein. (Bahr 128; cf. Renner)

But once this euphoria had died down, it was replaced by a more melancholic awareness of an irreducible gap between man and his newfound siblings. Much like the moats separating the spectators from the animals on display in the enclosures at Carl Hagenbeck's new *Tierpark* outside Hamburg, the barrier between human and animal was now harder to perceive, but no less insurmountable for all that.

There are numerous ways in which this boundary continued to be upheld even as it was apparently being dismantled on all fronts. Man's sense of supremacy in the world had been irrevocably damaged by the three blows ("Kränkungen") to mankind's species narcissism famously laid out by Freud in his 1917 essay "Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse": the first, cosmological blow was the Copernican revolution, which ousted mankind from its position at the centre of the universe; then came the biological blow in the shape of the theory of evolution—"Der Mensch ist nichts anderes und nichts Besseres als die Tiere, er ist selbst aus der Tierreihe hervorgegangen" (XII: 8). And, with the advent of the psychoanalytic understanding of unconscious drives and neuroses, man was no longer even "Herr [...] in seinem eigenen Haus" (XII: 11). The economy of the human Self was in disarray once it had been discovered that there was a bloodthirsty, sex-crazed animal in the basement, secretly running the show. The libido is conceived as the primal, blindly instinctual, *animal* side of man, and in challenging the autonomy of the human subject, the theory of the uncon-

scious may certainly be said to have troubled the humanist ideal of man as rational and self-determining, but this again is quickly transformed into a marker of human exceptionalism. Although the human unconscious is coded as animal, the animal itself, because it lacks language and self-consciousness, is not granted an unconscious. Thus neurosis becomes man's "Vorrecht vor den Tieren," (XI: 429), a unique capacity, even, that sets him over and against other animals.[1]

Ultimately, this discovery of man's animal nature was nothing but a rediscovery, or an enforced reinterpretation of the Aristotelian definition of man as the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον,[2] the animal possessing language (λόγος), which in turn implies reason, the capacity for abstract thought, self-consciousness, the ability to make and use tools, subjectivity, historicity, an awareness of death, and all the heart-ache, and the thou-

[1] "Es ist ohne weiteres ersichtlich, daß dies auch die Bedinungen der großen Fortschritte sind, die der Mensch über seine Gemeinschaft mit den Tieren hinaus gemacht hat, so daß seine Fähigkeit zur Neurose nur die Kehrseite seiner sonstigen Begabung wäre" (Freud XI: 429).

[2] This exact formulation is not, as far as I am aware, to be found anywhere in Aristotle, but is rather a paraphrase of the following sentences from Book I of the *Politics*, where, immediately after having characterised man as the political animal, he continues: "And why man is a political animal in a greater measure than any bee or any gregarious animal is clear. For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech [λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζώων]" (1253a).

The pithier formulation is used most prominently by Heidegger, e.g. in *Sein und Zeit* §6: "Das Dasein, d. h. das Sein des Menschen ist in der vulgären ebenso wie in der philosophischen 'Definition' umgrenzt als ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, das Lebende, dessen Sein wesenhaft durch das Redenkönnen bestimmt ist" (HGA 2: 34). Even though Heidegger always insisted that *Dasein* was not to be equated with *Mensch*, it is nevertheless, as the above quote clearly shows, defined as "das Sein des Menschen." An animal, by Heidegger's definition, can never be or have *Dasein*, because, as he elaborates in his lectures on *Parmenides*, it is τὸ ζῷον ἄ-λόγον: the animal "dem das Wort versagt ist." (It is not clear who exactly is pronouncing this denial or interdiction, but, in view of the fact that man is the only animal that has "the word," it stands to reason that it is he who withholds it from the animal.) It is also in this context that Heidegger states—*contra* Rilke's eighth *Duino Elegy*, which begins: "Mit allen Augen sieht die Kreatur das Offene"—that "[d]er Mensch, und er allein, ist das Seiende, das, weil es das Wort hat, in das Offene hineinsieht und das Offene im Sinne des ἀληθές sieht. Das Tier dagegen sieht das Offene gerade nicht und nie und mit keinem einzigen aller seiner Augen" (HGA 54: 231). I discuss Rilke's conception of the Open in greater detail in chapter 2.

sand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. "Jetzt war der Mensch auch ein Tier geworden," but he was still the only animal that had language, and his inability to communicate with his fellow creatures weighed heavily upon him. The insurmountable gap between man and animal was language. It is significant that the paradigm shift in representations of animals around 1900 coincided with the so-called "Sprachkrise," the pervasive crisis of faith in the ability of language to describe reality. In the absence of the metaphysical certainties at the base of anthropocentrism, language and self-consciousness suddenly seemed more like a liability than a privilege—the bars of the animals' cages might have disappeared from view, but they were still there; and now they were around man, while the animals roamed free out in the Open.

It was around this time that writers began looking to non-human, non-linguistic modes of perceiving the world. A particularly salient characteristic of the new animal poets, Walzel writes, "ist das eifrige Streben, sich ins Tier einzufühlen und seine Seelenvorgänge ihm abzulauschen" (53). But this was by no means limited to the literature of the period. 1909 saw the publication of Jakob von Uexküll's *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere*, for instance, which posited that each living being had its own specific "Umwelt" that defined its unique perspective on the world. Rarely before had biological science shown such an interest in the subjective experience of nonhuman animals.[3] Meanwhile, the *Blaue Reiter* artist Franz Marc was proclaiming the "animalisation" of art. In a letter to Reinhard Piper dated 30 April 1910, Marc wrote:

[3] On the importance of Uexküll's work for modern authors, including Rainer Maria Rilke, see especially Herwig. On the influence of Uexküll's theories on philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and

> Ich suche mein Empfinden für den organischen Rhythmus aller Dinge zu steigern, suche mich pantheistisch einzufühlen in das Zittern und Rinnen des Blutes in der Natur, in den Bäumen, in den Tieren, in der Luft [...]. Ich sehe kein glücklicheres Mittel zur "*Animalisierung* der Kunst" als das Tierbild. Darum greife ich danach. [...] Bei einem van Gogh oder einem Signac ist alles animalisch geworden, die Luft, selbst der Kahn, der auf dem Wasser ruht, und vor allem die Malerei selbst. (Marc 98)

In a fragment written the following year, Marc asks: "Gibt es für Künstler eine geheimnisvollere Idee als die [...], wie sich wohl die Natur in dem Auge eines Tieres spiegelt? Wie sieht ein Pferd die Welt oder ein Adler, ein Reh oder ein Hund?" He goes on to deplore what he regards as the squalid and soulless convention of placing an animal in a landscape as it is seen by human eyes, "statt uns in die Seele des Tieres zu versenken, [...] um dessen Bilderkreis zu erraten" (99). These are not idle ruminations on Marc's part: "Diese Betrachtung soll keine müßige causerie sein, sondern uns zu den Quellen der Kunst führen" (99). The ultimate goal of the "animalisation" of art is to rediscover the roots of art itself, and the way to achieve this lies via the animal. Indeed, as the discovery of Palaeolithic cave paintings, such as those at Font-de-Gaume (discovered in 1901) and at Altamira (discovered in 1879 but not generally accepted as authentic until 1902) had only recently revealed, the prehistoric roots of painting lay precisely in the representation of animals (and not humans). Marc's question regarding the "mysterious idea" of the other's perspective on the world can be seen as the essential question behind all artistic expression.[4]

Gilles Deleuze, see Brett Buchanan's *Onto-Ethologies*.

[4] George Steiner writes that "[i]t is a commonplace of ethnography that early, 'primitive' art forms were meant to tempt towards domesticity, towards familiarity, the animal presences in the great dark of the outside world. Cave paintings are talismanic and propitiatory rites performed to make of the encounter with the teeming strangeness and menace of organic presences a source of mutual recognition and of

More so than any other "other," the figure of the animal holds a particular significance for the human precisely because the human is also an animal. The animal is, by definition, the "other" of the human insofar as the latter is conceived as the only animal that has language. Thus, the essential difference between "man" and "animal" derives from language, and it is also essentially linguistic: "The animal," writes Jacques Derrida in his monumental *L'animal que donc je suis,* "is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other" (*Animal*, 23). And this authority derives from language—from the very fact that man, and man alone, has λόγος.[5] In order to draw attention to the questionable legitimacy of the nominative singular "The Animal" as a monolithic designation for *all living beings except man*, Derrida coins the term "animot," a combination of the words "animal" and "mot" (*word*), which, although singular, sounds like the plural *animaux*, and thus serves at once as a reminder of the variegated multiplicity hidden behind this single word, and at the same time to draw attention to the fact that the very categories of "man" and "animal" are artefacts of language. Nevertheless, says Derrida, it would be *trop bête* to believe that one could

benefit. The marvels of the penetrative mimesis on the bison-walls at Lascaux are solicitations: they would draw the opaque and brute force of the 'thereness' of the non-human into the luminous ambush of representation and understanding. All representations, even the most abstract, infer a rendezvous with intelligibility or, at the least, with a strangeness attenuated, qualified by observance and willed form. Apprehension (the meeting with the other) signifies both fear and perception. The continuum between both, the modulation from one to the other, lie at the source of poetry and the arts" (138–39).

[5] Qualifications of this definition, such as Giorgio Agamben's early suggestion that in fact "man is not the 'animal possessing language', but instead the animal deprived of language and obliged, therefore, to receive it from outside himself" (*Infancy and History*, 57) do nothing to change the basic structure of the human–animal relationship as one defined according to a specific relationship to λόγος.

simply ignore or abolish the abyssal rupture that divides "man" from "animal." Rather than questioning whether or not there is a limit at all, one should attempt to think "what a limit becomes once it is abyssal, once the frontier no longer forms a single indivisible line but more than one internally divided line; once, as a result, it can no longer be traced, objectified, or counted as single and indivisible" (30–31). In other words, it may be futile or naïve to think that one might simply decide to suspend or eradicate the discontinuity between "man" and "animal"—by fiat, as it were—but it is equally foolish to assume that these two words describe two discrete, natural categories that are fundamentally stable and mutually exclusive.

The dividing line separating "man" from "animal" is thus not of the order of a differentiation between species—since there is no species called simply "animal"—but rather runs *through* man himself. Hence, while ostensibly describing separate entities, the terms in fact mask a multiplicity whose boundaries are porous and open to resignification. A central tension within the discourse on the human–animal relationship stems from the inherent ambiguity and instability of the terms themselves. Throughout this dissertation, I deliberately use the now-antequated "man" as the opposite of the no-less-problematic "animal" as a reminder of the arbitrary and prejudicial assumptions at the base of *both* terms. As I will show, the concepts of "the animal" and of "animality" as employed by the writers and thinkers under discussion are in fact informed by a largely unacknowledged internal heterogeneneity and are hence in need of differentiation.[6]

[6] In the interests of readability, I have chosen not to place the terms in "scare quotes," but I invite readers to provide their own.

An interrogation of "this plural and repeatedly folded frontier" (Derrida *Animal*, 30) calls for a different kind of thinking about "the animal" than that which the Western philosophical tradition—at least since Aristotle, and certainly since Descartes—has typically allowed. "For thinking concerning the animal [*la pensée de l'animal*], if there is such a thing, derives from poetry [*revient à la poesie*]. There you have a thesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially [*par essence*], had to deprive itself of. It is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking" (7). The phrase "la pensée de l'animal" here involves a deliberately ambiguous subjective/objective genitive: it is both thoughts *about* animals and the thoughts *of* animals (animal cognition). It is the latter, above all, that the Western philosophical tradition has had to do without (or perhaps even more strongly: do away with), "*par essence*," that is to say, not only "essentially" but *by*, and *for the sake of, its very essence*. The fundamental tenets of anthropocentrism demand that thought remain the privileged site of human superiority—the radical separation of the animal body from the rational human mind is the very raison-d'être of the Cartesian *cogito*. Thus, if there is such a thing as animal thought (in the dual, reciprocal sense), it derives from, and comes back to, poetry (*revient à la poésie*).

There are, Derrida says, fundamentally "only two types of discourse, two positions of knowledge, two grand forms of theoretical or philosophical treatise regarding the animal," each predicated on a different experience of the animal gaze, and, more importantly, a different response to the implications of that gaze.

> In the first place, there are texts signed by people who have no doubt seen, observed, reflected on the animal, but have never *seen themselves being seen* by the animal [*ne se sont jamais* vus vus *par l'animal*]. Their gaze has never

> intersected with that of an animal directed at them [...]. If, indeed, they did happen to see themselves being seen furtively by the animal one day, they took no (thematic, theoretical, or philosophical) account of it. They either could not or would not draw any systematic consequence from the fact that an animal could, facing them, look at them, clothed or naked, and in a word, without a word, *address them*. (13, transl. corrected)

The others, those who have not only acknowledged the ability of the gaze of the animal other to address them but attempted to draw "systematic" consequences, to allow this acknowledgement to flow back into their discourse on the animal, are, of course, the poets. And we would include Franz Marc in this group, as his question, "Wie sieht ein Pferd die Welt?" is, in this sense, a fundamentally *poetic* question, in that it acknowledges not only that a particular animal has a distinct perspective on the world, but also that this perspective is interesting in and of itself, and, conversely, that the answer or answers to this question, that the very act of posing the question in the first place, can have a significant effect on how we humans see and interpret and represent the world around us. Marc's "Animalisierung der Kunst" would thus likewise be a fundamentally poetic—or, more specifically, a *zoopoetic*—endeavour.

The "allgemein bekannten und unveränderlichen Charaktere der Tiere," which Lessing identified as the precondition for the symbolic function of animals in fables, are in turn dependent on a familiar, universal taxonomy, in which these essential characteristics of each animal are codified. Structurally, there is little difference between fables and medieval bestiaries, which arranged the animals according to their symbolic or allegorical meaning, and Carl von Linné's *Systema Naturae*. The latter appears to us more objective and scientifically rigorous, given its emphasis on anatomy and empirical observation, but the principles guiding his taxonomy are only

apparently less arbitrary than those of the *Physiologus*.[7] Any taxonomy is always at base an attempt to impose order on nature by means of interpretation, by ascribing a specific significance to it. As such they are all reiterations of Adam's naming of the animals in the Book of Genesis. In the *Summa Theologica* (1265–74), St. Thomas Aquinas states that although "in a state of innocence man would not have had any bodily need of animals [...] man needed animals in order to have experimental knowledge of their natures. This is signified by the fact that God led the animals to man, that he might give them names expressive of their respective natures" (1:919). The primary use, in other words, that man had of animals was *intellectual*, not bodily, in that it was his ability to identify and correctly label the animals which set him apart from them, even as it was this parade of animals which in turn enabled him to establish this difference. Man needs "experimental knowledge of *their natures*," in order to be secure in his own. This is what makes Derrida's suggestion of "a taxonomy of the *point of view of animals*" (13) so radical: as an institution, taxonomy itself is founded on man's dominion over nature.

When the animals in the literature around 1900 begin to "misbehave" or "resist" the metaphorical significances with which they have been burdened, it creates a particularly disquieting effect in the reader, perhaps because we generally expect the symbolic meaning of literary animals to be easy to determine. Traditionally, we read

[7] Tom Tyler's essay "Four Hands Good, Two Hands Bad" offers an excellent and provocative overview of some of the debates and controversies regarding Linnaean taxonomy, specifically with regard to the place of Homo Sapiens in relation to other primates. (The essay is ostensibly about Franz Kafka's "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," and was even reprinted in the collection *Kafka's Creatures*, but the story barely features in Tyler's analysis, and his claim that Rotpeter grants "temporal priority" [181] to the human is confusing at best.)

them as symbols or metaphors, and it is an unsettling experience when we are unable to say exactly *what* these symbols and metaphors stand for—it troubles the most fundamental assumptions of humanism and anthropocentrism. And if this "new" literary animal emerges at the turn of the twentieth century, it is in large part because the "Sprachkrise" had revealed that one of the pillars of anthropocentrism was built on shifting sands. As I have already emphasised, from the very beginning, language has been seen as the defining characteristic of man, as that which set him apart from other animals. Man is the animal that has language: language is the dividing principle, it is that which precipitated the division of the world into Self and Other. By 1900, this division had become an insurmountable problem for European writers and thinkers. The transcendental unity of the "I" was being dismantled on all fronts—"Je est un autre" (Rimbaud); "Das Ich ist unrettbar" (Mach); "das Ich ist nicht Herr in seinem eigenen Haus" (Freud) etc.—and with it the sense of order and harmony guaranteed by the institution of metaphysical anthropocentrism. "Wenn ein Thier ich sagen könnte," Immanuel Kant had written over a century earlier in his lectures on philosophical anthropology, "so wäre es mein Camerad. Das Ich giebt einem jeden den Vorzug, sich zum Mittelpunckt der Welt zu machen" (207). Man is the only animal that can say "I"—but now "I" was another. The crisis of language is a crisis of anthropocentrism. Which means it was also a crisis of a certain way of thinking about animality. In fact, I would like to suggest that the crisis of language and representation is inextricably linked to an attendant 'crisis of the animal', which may be seen as the result of the profound social transformation of human–animal relations that had taken place over the course of the nineteenth century, but which also has to do with

the intimate and constantly reaffirmed link between the animal and the origin of language, poetry, art, and figurative representation as such. In other words, a re-evaluation of the nature of language and poetic or figurative expression necessarily carried with it a re-appraisal of the figure of the animal. And it is at the intersection of these two questions—the question of language and the question of the animal—that I locate what I refer to as the poetics of animality, or zoopoetics.

II. What Is Zoopoetics?

Paul Valéry once defined poetics as "a name for everything that bears on the creation or composition of works having language at once as their substance and as their instrument" (qtd. in Todorov 7). Taking this useful definition as a starting point, we might posit that zoopoetics is concerned with the interplay between animality and language in the creation or composition of such works. That is to say, while poetics in general is concerned with objects whose "substance" and "instrument" is language—treating language as both the medium and the message, in other words—zoopoetics is concerned not only with the constitution of the animal in and through language, but also the constitution of language in relation and in opposition to the figure of the animal. Zoopoetics thus also always involves the question of zoopoiesis, of the creation *of* the animal as much as the creation *by means of* the animal. In a sense, zoopoetics may be regarded as the most fundamental form of poetics, in that it incorporates the primary distinction between human and animal on the basis of language. By interrogating this relationship between animality and language, zoopoetics thus inhab-

its the "abyssal rupture" between human and animal, and reveals how that dividing line is fragmented, unstable, and internally incoherent.

One should distinguish between two separate yet related forms of zoopoetics as it relates to the study of animals in literature, or to literary animal studies: on the one hand, zoopoetics is an object of study in and of itself, an attribute of literary and theoretical works that in one way or another deal centrally with the figure of the animal in relation to language, writing, and thought. The works by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Luigi Pirandello, and Franz Kafka under consideration in this dissertation are all chosen because of the particular ways they are informed by zoopoetics. Some, such as Hofmannsthal's *Gespräch über Gedichte* (1904), may be regarded as "zoopoetic manifestos" because of the bold and radical statements they make about the place and function of animals and animality in language and representation. Hofmannsthal stresses the essential link between animality and poetic language by positing the moment of animal sacrifice as the origin of all symbolism. Others are more subtle, such as Pirandello's 1915 novel *Si gira...*, which mobilises a vast array of clichés and tropes, overloading the tiger at the centre of the narrative with metaphorical and symbolic significances until they all come crashing down in the end in a "tropical 'malfunction'" (Moses 10) that short-circuits the excessively convoluted narrative structure. What all of these texts have in common is a preoccupation with the transgression of the boundaries between human and animal through language.

On the other hand, zoopoetics presents a disciplinary and methodological question, namely: what can the study of animals contribute to literary studies and vice

versa? While animal studies may undoubtedly be able to tell us something about animals and their place in human history and society, I would also like to think that literary animal studies can also tell us something about *literature*, and moreover something to which conventional literary studies might otherwise be blind, particularly as it has been marked by the tendency to disregard the ubiquitous animal presence in literary texts, or else a single-minded determination to read animals exclusively as metaphors and symbols for something else. That is to say, insofar as literary studies has paid any attention to animals in literature, it has almost invariably taken the form of an investigation of "animal imagery" in a given text or œuvre. As Margot Norris writes in her groundbreaking study, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*, "*Imagery* presupposes the use of the concrete to express the abstract, and indeed, it seem[s] that nowhere in literature [are] animals to be allowed to be themselves, to refer to Nature and to their own animality without being pressed into symbolic service as metaphors, or as figures in fable or allegory (invariably of some aspect of the human)" (Norris 17). This concern for the animal's autonomy within the literary text mirrors Oskar Walzel's distinction between animal narratives in the fable tradition, which spoke of the animal while meaning the human, and more recent works (i.e. from around 1900), in which "das Tier um seiner selbst willen dichterisch erfaßt [wird]" (Walzel 53). And, indeed, the straightforward metaphorical conception of the literary animal had become all but untenable by the turn of the twentieth century, not only because of the emergent crisis of the anthropocentric assumptions that compel us to view any nonhuman presence in terms of its significance for the human, but also a crisis surrounding the nature and status of *metaphorical language* itself.

There seems to be a fundamental link between animality and metaphoricity within language, a "fantastic transversality," as Akira Lippit puts it. Lippit has proposed the term "animetaphor" to describe the irreducible tension between the animal and the metaphor, particularly literary or rhetorical language:

> The animal brings to language something that is not part of language and remains within language as a foreign presence. That is, because the animal is said to lack the capacity for language, its function in language can only appear as an other expression, as a metaphor that originates elsewhere, is transferred from elsewhere. (*Electric Animal*, 165–6)

The animal's presence within language and discourse is hence always at base metaphorical. This originary metaphoricity, in turn, has the capacity to destabilise whatever metaphorical valences subsequently become attributed to an animal figure within a text. The "animetaphor" is thus both a metaphor and not a metaphor, an *anti*metaphor, even; occupying both positions at once, it stands for the simultaneous production and dissolution of meaning. Like Derrida's *animot*, the animetaphor constitutes an intractable presence within language, resisting the pre-established strictures of syntax and grammar and remaining resolutely unassimilable to meaning. As such, it is a key figure of zoopoetics.

Recent scholarship within animal studies nevertheless exhibits a pervasive uneasiness regarding the metaphorical conception of the animal in literature and culture. On the one hand, this may be attributed to a rather narrow conception of metaphor as a mode of signification where one thing (the 'figure' or 'vehicle') *stands for* something else (the 'ground' or 'tenor'), which is the *actual* or intended meaning, to which the 'figure' is subordinate and ultimately interchangeable. This is or certain-

ly has been the dominant mode of reading animals in literary texts (and elsewhere), which never stand for themselves but only ever for something else. They are always the 'instrument,' never the 'substance,' to use Valéry's terms. The specificity of the animal, either as a being or as a figure, is thus systematically denied.

This wariness of a metaphorical conception of the animal in turn speaks to a more general suspicion, by no means unjustified, that such a conception serves ultimately to assimilate the animal to a fundamentally logocentric discourse and hence to reduce "animal problems to a principle that functions within the *legibility* of the animal: from animal to *ani*-word," as Jonathan Burt writes in response to Derrida's *animot* ("Morbidity and Vitalism," 166). The question of the animal thus turns out to have been the question of language all along. Conversely, however, from a literary and philosophical standpoint, we might also posit that the question of language has itself also always been the question of the animal. What would it mean for literary studies if we were to take the implications of this involution seriously? Obviously, we cannot be content to look for animal *imagery*, or to interpret the animal out of the text by 'discovering' the true significance behind the animal figure, which is thus rendered entirely instrumental and substitutable. Rather, a zoopoetic approach to literature must first and foremost be attentive to the *specific* way animals operate in literary texts as "functions of their literariness" (McHugh "Animal Agents," 490). In other words, the figure of the animal is not merely one trope in an author's poetic arsenal that could easily be replaced by any other, but rather presents a specific problem *to* and *for* language and representation. Why, after all, have animals always served as such exemplary metaphors and symbols? Why, in the mythical and prehistoric ori-

gins of painting, music, poetry, (and more recently, film), of the origin of language itself, does the animal always play such a prominent role, when it is precisely these things which are held up as proof of the inherent difference between man and animal? Is it not, as John Berger suggested in his seminal essay, "Why Look at Animals?" because "the first metaphor was animal"? And is this idea not in and of itself a fundamentally *zoopoetic* idea? In many ways, this dissertation may be seen as a response to this suggestion. I will therefore now turn to Berger's essay, in order to explore some of the implications of imputing this primary metaphoricity to the animal.

Why Look at Animals?

Berger's essay in fact comprises three separate essays originally published in the journal *New Society* in 1977, respectively entitled "Animals as Metaphor," "Vanishing Animals," and "Why Zoos Disappoint." The latter two are chiefly concerned with animals as images and spectacle, but for the purposes of my argument here, I will primarily be focusing on the first, which deals with the relationship between animals and language. At the beginning of the text, Berger posits a radical shift in the place of animals in Western society, "by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken" (3). Whereas before this watershed—which is to say: before the rise of capitalism and the bourgeoisie—animals had been "at the centre of [man's] world," now they have been "rendered absolutely marginal" (24). There is an undeniable note of idealised nostalgia in Berger's text for a more 'authentic' human–animal relationship in the pre-industrialised world, but nevertheless it is not an Edenic scenario characterised by harmony and mutual understanding: man

and animal have always scrutinised each other across what he calls "a narrow abyss of non-comprehension" (5). It is this mutual non-comprehending gaze, and above all the experience of "*being seen* by the animal" (Berger's italics), which is to say, the awareness of being seen "as [man's] surroundings are seen by him," which leads man to attribute power to the animal. The look of the animal is "familiar"—i.e. man recognises this look as similar to his own—but never identical with it. "The animal," Berger insists, "has secrets which, unlike the secrets of caves, mountains, seas, are specifically addressed to man" (5). As this statement makes clear, we are dealing here first and foremost with a subjective, anthropocentric perspective: the question in Berger's title, "Why Look at Animals?", is likewise specifically addressed to man: why should we, humans, look at animals? The urgency of Berger's question stems from his sense that the pervasive and accelerating disappearance of animals from the everyday reality of human existence will soon render it impossible really to look at animals in a meaningful way at all—which is to say in such a way that the animal can look back. The very possibility of seeing oneself being seen [*se voir vu*] by an animal, in Derrida's terms, is thus disappearing in a culture in which "animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are" (Berger 16).

In his close reading of the essay, Jonathan Burt summarises the rupture posited by Berger as follows: "the linguistic animal is replaced by the visual animal. It is because animals have stopped replying (with their look), their part of the conversation

if you like, that the companionship has broken down" ("Close Reading," 208).[8] Berger notes that nowhere in the zoo can a spectator meet the gaze of an animal (28). This may be so, but what is it that we hope to find in the gaze of an animal? Why do animals see "through" us, as Rilke writes, and into "the Open"? The gaze of the animal does not "confirm" man, according to Berger, which is to say, it does not recognise him *as* human in the same way another human being does. This lack of recognition is profoundly unsettling, because man recognises himself in his animal others (giving rise to anthropomorphism), but their failure to reciprocate this recognition renders the encounter strange, disturbing, asymmetrical. This is also the source of what Berger refers to as the "inherently metaphorical" nature of the human–animal relationship: the recognition of similarity engenders an awareness of difference. This is the "narrow abyss of incomprehension" that separates man from animal.

In principle, this narrow abyss is identical to that separating the self from any Other, but, says Berger, the abyss separating two humans is at least potentially bridgeable by language—even if the encounter is silent or the two do not share a

[8] Burt writes that the "disappearance" of the animal posited by Berger is really the disappearance of animal death (i.e. slaughter), and its replacement with the spectacle of the zoo and nature films. This "disappearance" is furthermore marked by a shift from a linguistic conception (animals as metaphor) to a visual conception (animals as images/spectacle). So perhaps one could say that the visibility of animal death was a constitutive element of a pre-industrial, un-alienated, metaphorical conception of the animal—or rather, that the fetishisation of animal death, and the ritual moment of sacrifice in particular, bespeaks a yearning for a more "authentic" relationship between man and the natural world. This is worth pondering particularly in relation to the texts by Hofmannsthal and Pirandello discussed in chapters 1 and 3, respectively, which revolve around the figure of animal death, and, specifically for Hofmannsthal, of animal sacrifice, which, as Burt has written elsewhere, involves "formative, ritual, and, above all, visible elements" that serve to reinforce "social and cultural identities, as well as linkages of living beings and victims to divinities and mythologies" and which therefore "have no place in the contemporary scenes of killing in science, industry, and agriculture" ("Morbidity and Vitalism" 161).

common tongue, "the *existence* of language allows that at least one of them, if not both mutually, is confirmed by the other. Language allows men to reckon with each other as with themselves" (5, original italics). That is to say, language is that which unites humans—indeed it is what constitutes them *as* human—even as it sets them apart from other animals.

Berger's qualification that language allows "at least one" of the men, "if not both mutually" to be confirmed by the other is intriguing. What are the implications of this asymmetry? And how is it different from the lack of confirmation which man receives from the animal? In order to understand this somewhat puzzling remark, I would like to take a quick detour via Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, specifically the first section dealing with self-consciousness and the distinction between human and animal desire. This preliminary excursus will allow us to approach the second passage in Berger's essay which I wish to focus on, namely his claim that "the first metaphor was animal" and that the human-animal relationship is at heart a metaphorical one. The two problems that I am extracting from Berger's essay—the constitution of the (human) subject and the nature of metaphor—are related, and moreover undergo radical changes around 1900, changes which, as I argue, are closely linked to the shift in the conception and representation of the animal that occurred at the same time.

The distinction between animal and human desire which Kojève advances at the beginning of his commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* has to do with the constitution of the human subject as self-identical and self-sustaining, identical over time, as an "I that is essentially different from, and radically opposed to, the non-

I" (4). What Kojève calls 'animal desire' is the desire for an object, which the subject wishes to appropriate for itself. All 'desire' must be satisfied through an act of negation: so for example an animal senses a desire for food, and can only satisfy that desire by devouring the food object. The "I of Desire" thus marks an absence, "an emptiness" which can be filled positively only through the negation and "assimilation" of the desired non-I. As a result, "the positive content of the I, constituted by negation, is a function of the positive content of the negated non-I. [...] The I created by the active satisfaction of [...] a Desire will have the same nature as the things toward which that Desire is directed." In the case of animal desire, which is the desire for an object, the resulting I will be "an animal I" and such an I will never attain self-consciousness (4–5). (Let us note here the circularity of this argument: the animal's I is constituted as animal because the desire that gives rise to it is already animal in nature.)

In order for self-consciousness to arise, in order for the I to be a human I, in other words, its desire must be directed not towards an object, but towards another desire. This desire for another desire is self-reflexive, and self-conscious, because it presupposes the recognition of another desire as a desire like one's own, and thus this 'human desire' is in fact the desire to be recognised in return. But, says Kojève, "the man who wants to be recognized by another in no sense wants to recognize him in turn. If he succeeds, then, the recognition will not be mutual and reciprocal: he will be recognized but will not recognize the one who recognizes him" (10). A fundamental characteristic of human desire, therefore, is the disavowal of the initial recognition of the other as similar to oneself. Indeed, human desire appears first and

foremost to be *the desire to be human* and to be recognised as such, without having to recognise the humanity, which is to say the subjectivity and right to say 'I', of the other. This, I would argue, is the reason for Berger's suggestion that "at least one of [the men], if not both mutually, is confirmed by the other."

And yet Berger's and Kojève–Hegel's accounts of the birth of self-consciousness and human subjectivity are not entirely commensurate. Both proceed from the distinction between man and animal, but for Kojève the primordial, "anthropogenetic" encounter that gives rise to self-consciousness takes place between two men, or rather, "between two beings that claim to be men" (11), whereas for Berger the "first" encounter is between man and animal. If "no animal confirms man" (read: recognises man as such) it is because no animal believes itself to be a human being.[9] An animal looks at man the same way it looks at other species, Berger says, but it "does not reserve a special look for man. But by no other species except man will the animal's look be recognised as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look" (5). Here, self-consciousness aris-

[9] Pets do, which is why Berger does not regard them as true animals: "The pet *completes* [its owner], offering responses to aspects of his character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed" (14). The owner, in return, is not a real man, because of his dependence on his pet for recognition. Berger observes that "the autonomy of both parties has been lost," which means that the "parallelism of their separate lives has been destroyed" (15). Berger is quite adamant that the life of an animal is "never to be confused with a man's" (6). The misrecognition of an animal as a human being threatens our own humanity.

Pets are similarly scorned by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who regard them as "sentimental, Oedipal animals each with its own petty history," and flatly declare that "anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 240)—not even indulging in the obvious pun here, incidentally, i.e. of describing such people as "bêtes" (the original French reads, "tous ceux qui aiment les chats, les chiens, sont des cons[!]"), perhaps because describing cat-lovers as "bête" would have held open the possibility that a pet might serve as a vehicle for becoming-animal, which is explicitly reserved for more 'charismatic' and less individuated pack animals, such as wolves and rats.

es through the recognition of the animal's gaze as familiar, as fundamentally similar to man's own gaze. Berger's account is grounded in human exceptionalism, just as Hegel's is, but it is a melancholy and limited exceptionalism, focused on "the loneliness of man as a species" (6), a loneliness that stems from a sense of exceptionality that no other species appears to recognise. For Berger, man's desire for recognition extends to his animal others, whereas in the Hegelian model such a constellation is fundamentally uninteresting, because, presumably, it does not lead to the "fight for pure prestige carried on for the sake of 'recognition' by the adversary" (Kojève 11) and is thus useless in explaining the origin of the master/slave dialectic which structures human reality. And yet ultimately this dialectic *is* useful when seeking to conceptualise or understand the relationship between man and animal: Essentially, man does not want to recognise the animal as his equal, even as he desires for it to identify him as its master. But the animal does not play along. Because it lacks human language, because it does not and cannot say "I" in a way that man will understand, it cannot assert itself and complete the dialectical action. One reaction to this reticence or inability is simply to assert, unilaterally, man's superiority and dominion over animals and all of nature.

There is, however, another reaction: a feeling of unease in man. A sense of envy, almost, that animals do not have to participate in this eternal dialectical struggle. They neither reap nor sow. This is the essence of the beginning of Nietzsche's second untimely mediation, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, which describes man as proud of his achievements and his self-consciousness and subjectivity, but nevertheless envious of the animals' insouciant grazing: "Dies zu sehen geht dem

Menschen hart ein, weil er seines Menschenthums sich vor dem Thiere brüstet und doch nach seinem Glücke eifersüchtig hinblickt—denn das will er allein, gleich dem Thiere weder überdrüssig noch unter Schmerzen leben, und will es doch vergebens, weil er es nicht will wie das Thier" (KSA I: 248). He doesn't want it—desire it—the way the animal does.

The First Metaphor

Berger describes man as a lonely species, forever excluded from the world of animals, with whom he senses a certain kinship, but who must forever remain distinct from him. Animals are "both like and unlike man" (6)—this is what leads Berger to regard the structure of the human–animal relationship as inherently metaphorical, in the sense that the similarities reveal the differences. This parallelism, as he calls it, "allowed animals to provoke some of the first questions and offer answers." He then makes three fundamental statements about the role of animals in the development of language and representation:

> The first subject matter for painting was animal. Probably the first paint was animal blood. Prior to that, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal. (7)

Berger is being very tentative here, of course, and with good reason: although it is true that the earliest cave paintings are of animals, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that the first paint was animal blood. In fact the earliest cave paintings yet discovered, e.g. at Chauvet and Lascaux, were made with mineral pigments. This does not rule out the possibility that early humans may have used the blood of slain animals to proto-artistic ends, of course, and that these early efforts have either not been

discovered, or more likely have simply not survived. But this can never amount to more than pure conjecture. If this statement is nevertheless worth holding on to, it is not because it tells us anything concrete about prehistoric attitudes toward animals and their role in the development of human culture, but rather because of how it relates to more modern concerns regarding the place of animals in human society and conversely the relationship of man to the natural world. As Berger himself emphasises, "[a]ll theories of ultimate origin are only ways of better defining what followed. [...] What we are trying to define, because the experience is almost lost, is the universal use of animal-signs for charting the experience of the world" (8). If it is "not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal," this is because everywhere you look animals play not only a central role in human artistic expression but actually a foundational role in conceptions of the development of human society and culture. Particularly in classical accounts of the origin of language, music, painting, etc., animals feature prominently at the origin of the very things from which they will subsequently be excluded. Ultimately, the same is of course true of the origin of man.

Berger's three propositions are given in reverse chronological order: "The first subject matter for painting was animal," but before there could be painting, an animal had to be sacrificed so that its blood might serve as paint. What makes this a statement about zoopoetics is the way in which the animal figures as both the *subject* as well as the *medium* of representation, or in Valéry's terms: both the substance and the instrument. But more than that, the sacrifice of the animal is the condition of possibility for the emergence of any such representation in the first place. In general one might therefore posit that in order for human culture to emerge, it is necessary

not only to sacrifice the animal but also to represent it, to transform it into a representation of itself, as the first metaphor.[10]

The idea that "the first metaphor was animal" has a dual significance: on the one hand, the animal was the first 'other' and the first man's encounter with the animal, his recognition in the animal of a fellow creature, produced in him the awareness of what Berger describes as the "narrow abyss" which separated them and set in motion the metaphorical oscillation between similarity and difference, self and other, through which the human subject is constituted. Or to put it differently, the primary consequence of this encounter was the creation of the human. At the same time, it also resulted in the creation of the animal. Thus, we might equally read the statement as saying that the first metaphor was quite literally "animal"—i.e. the very word or the idea of the animal (the "animot," in other words), having from this point onward little to do with any *actual* animals, being rather a cipher, a site of negativity against which the human may be defined.

The conception of the human as the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, projects the human into a relation of supplementarity vis-à-vis the animal, as "animal + *x*"; the essence of the human is one of excess, which compensates for a lack that was there before but which the animal, in its pure, inviolate animality, defined as radical immanence, wholeness and presence, is felt not to have. Thus man comes to be seen as *ein*

[10] Here we might also quote Georges Bataille, who in 1953 had the following to say about the Paleolithic cave paintings discovered at Lascaux thirteen years previously: "What these admirable frescoes proclaim with a youthful vigor is not only that the man who painted them ceased being an animal by painting them but that he stopped being an animal by giving the animal, and not himself, a poetic image" (*Cradle of Humanity*, 60). The transformation of the animal into a poetic image marks the transition from animal to human. (On Bataille's writings on Lascaux and the human–animal relationship, see especially Ungar; Guerlac; Buchanan "Painting the Prehuman"; and Lippit "*Arche*texts.")

Mängelwesen: a deficient creature, a being defined by a lack or insufficiency, which must be supplemented by means of language.[11] In the end, man is almost invariably defined as the animal that is not an animal.[12] This paradox is one of the fundamental tensions at the heart of the western tradition of metaphysical anthropocentrism, which continually seeks to maintain a rigid boundary between the mutually determining and delimiting categories of man and animal. At the same time, as Derrida observes, this "supplementarity makes possible all that constitutes the property of man" even though it "*is nothing*, neither a presence nor an absence, [...] neither a substance nor an essence of man. [...] Man *calls himself* man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity. The approach to these limits is at once feared as a threat of death, and desired as access to a life without difference" (*Of Grammatology*, 244). The animal "is on the side of death," (196), which means that it

[11] The term was coined by Arnold Gehlen in his seminal work of philosophical anthropology, *Der Mensch* (1940). Gehlen takes his cue from Johann Gottfried Herder, who, in his treatise on the origin of language offers a negative definition of man, who, born without language or instincts, consists at first of nothing but "Mängel und Lücken" (Herder 39; Gehlen 91–92). Perhaps inevitably, Gehlen came under fire for defining man not only in terms of his inadequacies but specifically for defining him *as* an animal—and a poor one at that! In the preface to the fourth edition (1950), Gehlen cites conservative sociologist and philosopher Hans Freyer, who had accused Gehlen of positing "den Menschen *fiktiv* als Tier, um dann zu finden, daß er als solches höchst unvollkommen und sogar unmöglich ist" (16–17, emphasis added). Evidently, to Freyer's mind, viewing man as an animal is nothing but a fiction, an irresponsible and disingenuous rhetorical manoeuvre employed to further a particular philosophical point but with no basis in reality. Gehlen responds to this allegation by saying that the purpose of the term is in fact precisely to highlight the paradoxical position of man in the natural world, not to offer a definitive definition of the essence of the human being.

[12] Perhaps the pithiest formulation belongs to Herder, who in the first sentence of his treatise on the origin of language declares: "Schon als Thier, hat der Mensch Sprache" (3), which, to all intents and purposes means that even in a state of animality, man was already a man. Similarly, for Hegel, man is that animal which, precisely because he knows himself to be an animal, ceases to be one: "...gerade, weil er *weiß*, daß er Thier ist, [hört er auf], Thier zu seyn" (*Vorlesungen*, 101).

is, or at least it is held to be, "outside the text." But such characterisations ignore the fact that "the animal" is itself a construct of language. It is a word used, among many things, to designate that which is outside language, outside the "play of supplementarity." Animality is next to divinity (we will see this in Lord Chandos's description of his moments of ineffable transcendence as at once "göttlicher" and "tierischer" than any ordinary experience, and in the proximity of the animals to the angels in Rilke's conception of the Open). If zoopoetics is anything, it is a way of looking at, and thinking about, how animality functions *within* language, especially within poetic or metaphorical language. From Derrida's chain of non-supplementarity it appears as if the 'excluded others' are all interchangeable; but, at least judging from Berger's (and, as we shall see in Chapter 1, Bataille's) thinking concerning the animal, there is nevertheless a primacy of the sort of pure, unbroken alterity that the animal represents. Certainly, Hofmannsthal (and he is not alone) feels that children see the world as it really is, as do poets, but only because they are more *like* animals than other people—they will never be *in* the world in the same way as we like to imagine animals are, which is to say "outside language."

The process whereby the category of the human is produced and maintained by means of an "inclusionary exclusion" of the animal is the sole function of what Giorgio Agamben in his book *The Open: Man and Animal* has termed the "anthropological machine" (37). The concept of the animal as such may indeed be regarded as a by-product of this machine: Zoopoeisis is a necessary precondition for anthropopoeisis (and vice versa). One of the chief consequences of this process is that man constantly tries to conceive of and to understand himself *in terms* of his similarity to and

difference from other animals. Agamben observes that in the first nine editions of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, the genus "Homo" was not followed by the species denomination "sapiens" but rather by the imperative: *Nosce te ipsum* (know thyself). It follows that the knowledge imputed to man through the species name "sapiens" is in fact self-knowledge. The human, therefore, represents an anomaly within Linnaean taxonomy in that its name does not denote a specific characteristic but rather a particular faculty, namely "the *ability* to recognize himself" (*Open*, 26). Moreover, the classification of the genus *homo* as belonging to the order of *anthropomorpha*, or "man-like" animals, not only makes it necessary for the human to recognise himself as human in order to be human, he must also recognise himself in his animal others in order to constitute himself as different from them. "*Homo sapiens*," writes Agamben, "is neither a clearly defined species nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human" (26). The knowledge attributed to man in his Linnaean name thus derives from his response to the imperative to "know thyself"—a response which proceeds via the animal. Thus, we may venture a preliminary and partial answer to the question posed in Berger's title, "Why Look at Animals?" namely that looking at animals is a prerequisite for looking at ourselves.

III. Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, each focusing on a different author and each dealing with a different facet of zoopoetics. The chapters can be read in isolation, but together they follow a trajectory of progressive "animalisation" of the text from the more exploitative or triumphalist, sacrificial zoopoetics in Hofmannsthal via

Rilke's more melancholic ruminations, to Pirandello's construction and deconstruction of multiple frames, literal and metaphorical, none of which can contain the wild animal at their centre, and finally to Kafka, where language itself may be said to have become animal, threatening to evict the narrator from his textual edifice.

The first chapter, entitled "The Root of All Poetry: Animal Sacrifice and the Crisis of Representation," explores the connection between the "Sprachkrise" and the crisis of anthropocentrism by means of a close reading of two texts by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the "Chandos-Brief" (1902) and the "Gespräch über Gedichte" (1904). In the latter, animal sacrifice is cast as the origin of poetry. The fact that the animal can be sacrificed instead of the man is presented as the original symbolico-metaphorical substitution: just as in John Berger's aetiology, metaphor is born from the blood of the animal. In both cases, the animal serves not only as the *subject* of representation, but also as the *medium* through which representation can take place. Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics is thus grounded in animal sacrifice, which holds the promise of allowing the poet to "flow over" into what Georges Bataille calls the "immanent immensity" of animality.

The second chapter, entitled "A Lick and a Promise: Rilke's Anthropocynic Encounters," continues to explore the topos of the animal's radical immanence with specific reference to the works of Rainer Maria Rilke. If the Aristotelian ζῷον λόγον ἔχον was central to the previous chapter, here it is Nietzsche's reformulation of that definition whereby man is "das Tier, das versprechen darf." The crisis of language was to a large degree prompted by an abrogation of the metaphysical concept of

Truth. The promise serves first and foremost as a guarantee of its own truth-value, and, by extension, of the capacity of language to be true at all. For Rilke, the prerogative to make promises is forever tempered by his sense that the promise of language is inherently untenable, which prompts him to look to animals for a form of expression that might still be "true to life." The chapter begins with a discussion of Rilke's letters on Cézanne, in which he compares the painter to a dog that looks in the mirror and thinks "da ist noch ein Hund." To Rilke, this non-reflexive, canine gaze presents a model of artistic production that can overcome the inherent limitations of language and human self-consciousness. Dogs occupy a special place in all of Rilke's writings because unlike the other animals, which are wholly other and whose worlds are hermetically sealed, dogs have "eine verwandte Welt" to ours. As such they come closest to bridging the gap between our "gedeutete Welt" and the Open.[13] The chapter concludes with a discussion of a little-known short prose text of Rilke's, entitled "Eine Begegnung" (written in 1907, the same year as the poem "Der Hund" and the letters on Cézanne), which presents a melancholy reflection on the animal's silence and ab-

[13] Dogs fulfil a similar function in the works of W. G. Sebald, incidentally, as messengers from another place and, above all, another time. Thus, commenting on a painting by Johann Peter Tripp, Sebald notes: "Der Hund, der Geheimnisträger, der mit Leichtigkeit über die Abgründe der Zeit läuft, weil es für ihn keinen Unterschied gibt zwischen dem 15. und dem 20. Jahrhundert, weiß manches genauer als wir" (*Logis*, 188.) Likewise, in *Austerlitz*, the protagonist's rediscovery of his childhood home is heralded by a bas-relief of a dog carrying a branch in its mouth "den er, wie ich, bis in die Haarwurzeln erschauernd, erahnte, herbeigebracht hatte aus meiner Vergangenheit" (*Austerlitz*, 217). The dog's a-historicity allows it to inhabit all time periods simultaneously. As for Rilke (particularly in *Malte Laurids Brigge*), dogs come to be associated with memory, which in turn is linked to their ability to see the world as it truly is. Sebald expresses the link between a-historicity and Openness clearly in his short poem "Im Abseits": "Im Abseits | sieht das Auge | des Hundes alles | noch so wie es | von Anbeginn war" (*Über das Land*, 102).

dication of subjecthood and historicity, and the loneliness of man as the animal allowed to make promises.

The third chapter, entitled "Fearful Symmetries: Pirandello's Tiger and the Resistance to Metaphor," explores how the crisis of anthropocentrism was mediated through the figure of the animal beyond the immediate context of the predominantly Austro-Hungarian "Sprachkrise," through a reading of Luigi Pirandello's novel *Si gira...* (1915, republished in 1925 as *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*). The novel is best known for its vivid depiction of the world of early cinema and because Walter Benjamin cites it as one of the first meditations on alienation and the disappearance of the aura in the age of mechanical reproducibility. The fact that the entire text revolves around the figure of a tiger has received scant attention from scholars. In departing from the German-speaking context of the other chapters, this chapter aims to show how the question of the animal was central to reflections on language, representation, and identity throughout Europe during this period. I explore the ways in which this tiger disrupts or destabilises the representational framework in which it is placed. Essentially, the novel enacts the disjuncture between what the tiger *is* and what the tiger *means*. As Akira Lippit asserts, "animals resist metaphorization": the animality of the metaphor is fundamentally at odds with the animality of the animal. What emerges is an image of the animal as fundamentally unreadable but for that very reason infinitely writable and re-writable.

The final chapter, entitled "The Enemy Within: Kafka's Zoopoetics," focuses on the prose fragment, "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn" (1914) in order to explore what I refer to as the "animality of the text," which is a salient feature of Kafka's zoo-

poetics. Tracing a path from the "Kaldabahn" fragment to "Der Bau" (1923), I explore Kafka's repeated attempts to "inhabit" or "domesticate" the text, a process which is frequently conceived as an incursion into another creature's territory. There are two strategies involved in such "domestication," representing forms of writing: the first is "horizontal" and involves following or constructing tracks across the surface (the Kalda railway), the second is "vertical" and involves burrowing through the ground. Both strategies are consistently thwarted by an indomitable animal presence within the text itself. In order to account for this "animality" of the text, I again draw on Akira Lippit's conception of 'animetaphor' as the embodiment and at the same time antithesis of the metaphor, the site of an irresoluble yet productive tension between animal being and figurative language. Animetaphor is an apt description of the function and status of animal figures in Kafka's writing, in that it describes precisely the simultaneous construction and dissolution of meaning that characterises the disruptive presence of the "kleine Volk" that inhabits the textual ground which Kafka's narrators try in vain to make their own.

> Die Sprache hat die Menschheit aus dem Paradies vertrieben. Hätte die Menschheit aber die Sprache lieber den Affen oder den Läusen geschenkt, so hätten die Affen oder die Läuse daran zu tragen, und wir wären nicht allein krank, vergiftet, entwurzelt in der ungeheuren sprachlosen Natur.
>
> —Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*

Chapter I

The Root of All Poetry

Animal Sacrifice and the Crisis of Representation

I. "Die Gewalt der Worte"

The true province of a poet, wrote Hugo von Hofmannsthal, is the relationship between spirit and body, idea and expression, man and animal.[I] This statement, written in 1900, stems from Hofmannsthal's notes for an unfinished drama based on the myth of Jupiter and Semele. In the classical myth, Semele, the mother of Dionysus, is tricked by the jealous Hera to ask Jupiter to reveal himself to her in all his divine glory. This he does, reluctantly, and she dies as a result. In Hofmannsthal's version, the setting moves to Italy at the turn of the seventeenth century, and the two protagonists are a young lexicographer-cum-poet and his lover, whom he murders one night after she asks him to show her the essence of his work as a poet and he goes mad from the abyssal implications contained in the words "Ich" and "Du."

This is the plot as Hofmannsthal recounted it two years later in a letter to Fritz Mauthner. The Bohemian writer, feuilletonist, and prominent *Sprachkritiker* had written to Hofmannsthal in late October, 1902, expressing the excitement he had

[I] "Des Dichters eigentliches Gebiet: das Verhältniss von Geist zu Körper, Idee zum Ausdruck, Mensch zum Thier" (SW XVIII: 155).

felt upon reading the latter's "Brief des Lord Chandos," which had appeared in two instalments in the Berlin daily *Der Tag* on the 18th and 19th of that month. "Ich habe ihn so gelesen," Mauthner wrote, "als wäre er das erste dichterische Echo nach meiner 'Kritik der Sprache'. [...] Ich glaubte das Beste zu erleben, was ich geträumt hatte: Wirkung auf die Besten" (Stern 33). In his response, Hofmannsthal is reticent about granting Mauthner's claim to having provided the inspiration for the Chandos Letter, insisting that while there are undeniably striking parallels between it and some of the arguments advanced by Mauthner's *Beiträge zur Kritik der Sprache*, in fact his own thoughts "sind früh ähnliche Wege gegangen, vom Metaphorischen der Sprache manchmal mehr entzückt, manchmal mehr beängstigt" (33). He mentions Novalis's "merkwürdige 'Monolog'" as well as a few of his own earlier works as precursors to the *Chandos Letter* and as further repudiation of Mauthner's influence.[2] There is evidence to suggest that Hofmannsthal is being somewhat disingenuous here and that his engagement with Mauthner's critique of language was in fact more intensive than he is letting on, but it is certainly also true that Hofmannsthal had long been preoccupied with the problem of language and metaphor, as early essays such as "Philosophie des Metaphorischen" (1894) and "Eine Monographie" (1895) show. Hofmannsthal, like Mauthner and many of his contemporaries, was profoundly influenced by the works of Ernst Mach and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose essay "Ueber

[2] Just as Hofmannsthal's *Chandos-Brief* has come to be regarded as the manifesto of the crisis of language around 1900, Novalis's *Monolog*, written just over 100 years earlier, has been described as "eine Art Manifest der romantischen Sprachphilosophie überhaupt" (di Cesare 149). On the intertextual relationship between Hofmannsthal and Novalis see Schaber; and Wilke "Poetiken."

Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne" (1873, first published 1896) also presents significant parallels to the *Chandos-Brief*.[3]

But what exactly are the parallels between Hofmannsthal's Semele-fragment and the Chandos letter? Both texts deal centrally with language and each of the protagonists appears to suffer a 'linguistic crisis' of sorts, but other than that the link seems tenuous at best. Both also take place around 1600—Chandos's letter is dated 1603; the Jovian poet is held captive "bei den Mönchen bei denen der Tasso starb" (SW XVIII: 155)—although Hofmannsthal does not mention this in the brief synopsis he gives to Mauthner. Nor does he mention another salient and disturbing parallel: the central role of animals, specifically of the death of an animal by poison and its piercing, silent gaze in the face of death. Hofmannsthal's notes for the drama consist of five prose fragments, the first of which, entitled "Die Gewalt der Worte" and written in the first person, reads as follows:

> Ich bin Jupiter. Sie war Semele. Eines Abends kam ich nachhaus und da ereignete sich der Tod des Hundes. Sie erzählte mir alles, ich schaffte den Hund weg: da reizte sie mich durch die Frage nach dem Grund, dass Gott den Hund stumm sein lasse.
>
> Die Worte bei denen die Katastrophe erfolgt, sind Ich und Du (155)

In the second fragment, we read that it was Semele's brother, an officer in the army, who poisoned the dog, although we do not learn why. The dog "richtet sich Nachts

[3] Opinion has long been divided on whether Hofmannsthal knew Nietzsche's essay, and the common misconception that it remained unpublished until 1903 (rather than the actual 1896) seemed to rule out any direct influence, but as Mario Zanucchi has recently argued, critics have also tended to downplay Nietzsche's influence in order to cast Hofmannsthal as a more independent and original thinker. Zanucchi offers a largely compelling case for viewing Nietzsche's essay as a source for the *Chandos-Brief*, but ultimately his claims seem somewhat exaggerated. Or, to quote Hofmannsthal's letter to Mauthner: "Es besteht eben beides: Übereinstimmung und gewiß eine Verstärkung dieser Gedanken durch ihr Buch" (33).

mit brechendem Blick vor dem Bett der Liebenden auf" (155); and, in the final fragment (N5), "bevor der Hund mit brechenden Augen ans Bett gekommen ist, hat sie gebeten: er möge sich ihr *ganz* hingeben, so wie sie sich ihm giebt" (157). As Hofmannsthal's ideas for the lyrical drama continue to develop, the sequence of events changes, but the two key elements remain the same: on the one hand, the young woman who asks her lover to give himself over to her completely, even though she knows this will mean her death; and on the other the dying dog with the 'brechendem Blick'. In his letter to Mauthner, Hofmannsthal mentions only the story of the two lovers, and yet the death of the dog seems to be of equal or even greater importance: It is practically the first thing the narrator of the first fragment mentions, and it recurs in all the subsequent fragments. In the second, we read that "es müssen Thiere vorkommen, zu denen er ein sehr starkes Verhältniss hat" (155). How does this "Verhältniss" relate to the three fundamental "Verhältnisse" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and which this same fragment describes as "Des Dichters eigentliches Gebiet"? And how, finally, do these "Verhältnisse" relate to the overwhelming, limitless magic ("grenzenlosen Zauber") of the words "Ich" and "Du"—i.e. to the vertiginous and irreducible difference between Self and Other?

The key to approaching these questions lies in the repeated insistence on the dog's silence in the face of death. In the first fragment, Semele wants to know why "Gott den Hund stumm sein lasse." "Der Hund, der stumm verendet, ist die stumme Creatur" (157) we read in the last. In the third, we read:

> sein Gedankengang: sie sagte: ich bin für Dich nicht mehr als ein stummes Thier, und möchte zu Dir reden können. er: reden ist nicht für die lebendi-

> gen; im Wort ist immer die Sache und der Traum von der Sache zusammen
>
> diese Thierheit diese Stummheit Unlöslichkeit ist das Leben, das Reden ist die Verflüchtigung, Vergeistigung, Vernichtung (156)

Life—"das Leben"—is the centre of gravity around which all of Hofmannsthal's early works revolve. Life, for Hofmannsthal, stands for wholeness, plenitude, presence, immediacy, harmony and flux. Here, it is being equated with animality, muteness, and indissolubility. The animal is silent because it partakes fully of life—indeed, it *is* life—it is not divorced from life through language. Language, or speech, is not for the living; language has a deadening, volatilising, *spiritualising* effect. The word is always split between the thing itself (die Sache) and the dream of the thing (der Traum von der Sache). It is never whole and can never grasp the totality of life, because its function is to differentiate and distinguish between things, to divide the world up into discontinuous entities.[4] But life is indivisible, indissoluble (*unlöslich*), and therefore silent (*stumm*).[5] "Die Worte bei denen die Katastrophe erfolgt, sind Ich und Du"—the poet goes mad pondering the implications of these two words, but the "Katastrophe" does not refer (exclusively, at least) to the ensuing murder of his lover, but

[4] In an early diary entry (1891), the seventeen-year-old Hofmannsthal emphasised both the principle of division and separation underlying all conceptual language as well as the 'arbitrariness of the sign': "Die Sprache (sowohl die gesprochene als die gedachte, denn wir denken heute schon fast mehr in Worten und algebraischen Formeln als in Bildern und Empfindungen) lehrt uns, aus der Alleinheit der Erscheinungen einzelnes herauszuheben, zu sondern; durch diese willkürlichen Trennungen entsteht in uns der Begriff wirklicher Verschiedenheit und es kostet uns Mühe, zur Verwischung dieser Klassifikationen zurückzufinden und uns zu erinnern, daß gut und böse, Licht und Dunkel, Tier und Pflanze nichts von der Natur Gegebenes, sondern etwas willkürlich Herausgeschiedenes sind" (GW X 324).

[5] "Das 'Leben' als das ἕν χαὶ πᾶν [*die Natur als Ganzes*] [...] lässt sich nicht zerstückeln. In ihm ist die Sprache überflüssig und unmöglich. [...] Stummheit gründet zutiefst im Wesen des 'Lebens'" (Pestalozzi 31). Compare Mauthner's assertion that "die Natur ist vollends sprachlos. Sprachlos würde auch, wer sie verstünde" (*Beiträge*, 1:47).

rather to the original calamity of signification, of the division of the world into Self and Other, which wrenches man out of his Edenic, 'oceanic' state—out of 'life' in other words—and into the dead, spiritualised, human world of language.

The awareness that language, far from being an exalted, divinely endowed medium for the apprehension of the truth of the universe, in fact erects a barrier to reality, blocking our access to the world as it truly is—that is the very essence of the *Sprachkrise*. "Die Sprache hat die Menschheit aus dem Paradies vertrieben," writes Fritz Mauthner. The critique of language, therefore, is on the one hand "alles zermalmende Skepsis," but at the same time it is "eine Sehnsucht nach Einheit" (*Atheismus*, 4:447)—a quasi-mystical attempt to reclaim the lost sense of unity with the cosmos. For Hofmannsthal too such 'unity' is the ultimate truth and the true goal for any artist.[6] "Ich glaube, daß der Begriff des Ganzen in der Kunst überhaupt verlorengegangen ist," he writes in the 1896 lecture "Poesie und Leben" (GW VIII: 15). That same year, in a review of Peter Altenberg's *Wie ich es sehe*, he declares that only artists and children see life "wie es ist": "Sie sind die einzigen, die *das Leben als Ganzes* zu fassen vermögen. Sie sind die einzigen, die über den Tod, den Preis des Lebens, etwas sagen dürfen. Sie geben den Dingen ihre Namen und den Worten ihren Inhalt" (GW VIII: 228, emphasis added). And in his diaries, he repeatedly emphasises the need to overcome dualisms in order to perceive the "Zusammenhang aller Dinge."[7]

[6] "Die 'Einheit' des Lebens ist für Hofmannsthal die höchste Idee und auch die einzige Wirklichkeit" (Fick 347).

[7] E.g.: "Mir wird die innere Verwandtschaft der drei großen oratorischen Geister des Jahrhunderts, Schiller, Beethoven und Byron, immer deutlicher. Alle drei bewegen sich in großen Abstraktionen,

Whereas mundane, everyday language—and abstract, conceptual language in particular—relies on binary oppositions and reinforces a dualistic conception of the world, poetic language is possessed of magical power that can cut through the dualism and glimpse the 'immanent immensity' of 'life' in its indivisible unity. Thus when Hofmannsthal writes that the poet's "eigentliches Gebiet" is at the intersection between spirit and body, idea and expression, man and animal, it is because, through his "Wortgewalt" or "Sprachmagie" he is able to render those distinctions temporarily inoperative. It is this power which the Semele character senses in her lover, and which she begs him to reveal to her. "Du strömst in ein anderes Medium, als ich bin, Zeugungskraft aus," she says. "Immer dich ganz zu besitzen, wäre zu viel: aber einmal gieb dich mir ganz" (SW XVIII: 156). She feels that even as they are intimate together in bed, he is not fully there, and that "Anderswo thust Du etwas das noch wirklicher ist [...]. Etwas was Verschmelzung bedeutet, während Du an mir bloss hinstreichelst" (156). The key words here are *strömen*, *verschmelzen*, *fließen, auflösen*—images of flux, dissolution, surrender, loss of self. This dissolution or flowing over is a form of death—where all dualities are suspended, and the symbolic violence of the "I" is undone.[8] In order to attain this state of mystical oneness of death-like imma-

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Freiheit, Glück, Menschheit und lieben die starken, unvermittelten Kontraste. Allen dreien fehlt das Verständnis für den Zusammenhang aller Dinge, sie stellen Gott der Welt, dem Menschen die Natur als Gegensätze gegenüber" (GW X: 325).

[8] In his interpretation of his own works, written between 1916 and 1929, and published under the title *Ad me ipsum*, Hofmannsthal refers to this state as "Praeexistenz," a "Glorreicher, aber gefährlicher Zustand" characterised by early wisdom, exclusivity, and intellectual sovereignty: "Das Ich als Universum." Those who exist in this pre-existent state belong to "einer höchsten Welt" and generally try "diesen erhöhten Zustand zu wahren durch Supposition des quasi-Gestorbenseins." (GW X: 599; cf. Huyssen "Disturbance," 36–38).

nence, however, it seems an actual death is necessary. But because we cannot directly experience our own death—for death is the limit of experience, of language and consciousness, and thus the threshold separating the individual from infinity—he who would experience this radical immanence and dissolution must find a way of participating in the death of another: the boundaries of self and other are cancelled out, but always at the other's expense, through an act of poetic sacrifice.

The animals that populate Hofmannsthal's works, particularly in the period around 1900 when he was most deeply imbedded in the so-called *Sprachkrise*, are almost invariably poisoned, diseased, or otherwise on the verge of death—even as they embody unbridled life and *élan vital*. Hofmannsthal's early works (up to and including the *Andreas* fragment) show a frequent preoccupation with animal death, and especially with the infliction of cruelty and torture on animals (cf. Robertson). And nowhere is this preoccupation more closely tied to the problem of language and poetic expression than in the *Chandos-Brief* (1902) and in the *Gespräch über Gedichte* (1904), where the act of sacrificing a ram is presented as the origin of poetry and symbolism as such.

Now, a recent trend in Hofmannsthal scholarship seems to involve disavowing the importance of the *Sprachkrise* for the Chandos-Brief, and of animal sacrifice for the *Gespräch über Gedichte*. David Wellbery, for instance, considers "die sogenannte 'Sprachkrise'" to play "eine relativ nebensächliche Rolle im Chandos-Brief" (282), a sentiment supported by Hans-Jürgen Schings, who writes that "Trotz der fulminanten Rezeptionsgeschichte von Chandos' Sprachkrise ist doch nicht von der Hand zu weisen, daß sie keineswegs des Kern- und Zielstück des 'Briefs' ausmacht"

("Lyrik des Hauchs," 335). In the same essay, Schings seeks to disabuse readers and scholars of what he views as the long-standing misapprehension that the *Gespräch* presents animal sacrifice as the *root* of poetic symbolism. In fact, he claims, the sacrificial scene serves only to *illustrate* the dissolution of the self which characterises the symbol for Hofmannsthal, not as an aetiology of all symbolism and poetry as such. Schings's argument rests on the conviction, by no means unfounded, that what Hofmannsthal is really attempting to describe here is the poet's ecstatic loss of self for the duration of a single breath: this "Lyrik des Hauchs," as he calls it, is the true key to Hofmannsthal's poetics, Schings insists, not the act or the moment of animal sacrifice itself. But Schings is far too quick to dismiss the significance of animal sacrifice for Hofmannsthal's poetics. Surely it is relevant that Gabriel should choose to illustrate this phenomenon in terms of animal sacrifice and not some other "oceanic" moment, just as Chandos chooses the experience with the rats to illustrate the ineffable, "empty fullness" of his post-critical existence. Certainly, with respect to the *Brief* as well as the *Gespräch*, Schings would be correct in observing that the examples given are merely indicators of the larger, deeper truth or circumstance, which the narrator is at pains to put into words. But it would be rash to dismiss the examples as simply arbitrary and inconsequential. The sacrificial rite, just as the plight of the rats in Chandos' cellar, are deliberately chosen, analogous examples of this specific type of mystical, ecstatic experience. At the risk of being unfashionable, then, I would like in this chapter to insist not only that the *Sprachkrise* in fact *does* play a central role in the Chandos Letter but also that the sacrificial scene that Gabriel conjures up in the Dialogue in order to explain the origin of poetry and the symbol is in no way a merely

arbitrary example, as Schings would have us believe, of the experience of self-dissolution, where Hofmannsthal might just as well have chosen something else. No: the fact that Hofmannsthal chose to illustrate his conception of the poetic symbol by means of an act of animal sacrifice is an indication of an *essential* link between the question of language and poetry and the question of the animal. It is the goal of this chapter to show how and why animal sacrifice occupied such a central place in Hofmannsthal's poetics.

Referring to Chandos's reminiscences of how, in the period before his crisis, he used to drink the warm foaming milk from the udder of a beautiful gentle-eyed cow, Wellbery suggests that the first part of the *Chandos-Brief* is informed by what he terms a "*Laktopoetik*—eine Poetik des Milchstroms" (291), which comes to an end when Chandos becomes a witness to the death of the family of rats in his milk cellar. This 'lactopoetics' could be juxtaposed to what one might call 'haematopoetics'—a poetics of blood—encapsulated in the warm blood gushing from the ram's throat at the sacrificial moment in the *Gespräch über Gedichte*. What unites these two forms of poetics is their more or less overt eroticism or *jouissance* and their dependence on the image of flux, of overflowing and of flowing over (*Hinüberfließen*)—of the unobstructed flow of liquids that, each in their own way, are life-giving and life-sustaining. They also both fundamentally concerned with animals and the poet's relationship to animal life (and death). Indeed, one could argue that lactopoetics and haematopoetics are in fact both examples of what I would more broadly call Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics. The same goes for the "Lyrik des Hauchs" that Schings ascribes to Hofmannsthal. The inadequacy of this term becomes all the more evident when Schings

attempts to demonstrate that the pneumopoetics of the *Gespräch* is equivalent to Chandos's 'rheopoetics'—the recurrent metaphors of flowing and overflowing employed to describe the 'oceanic' experience of continuity.[9] This is undoubtedly the case, but neither "Hauch" nor "Flut" as master metaphor is able to account for the preponderance of animal figures, sacrifice and death in Hofmannsthal's poetics. But even if one were to grant Schings his fixation on the "Hauch," to what, ultimately, does this *Hauch* refer if not the primal animating breath of life—the very *animus* that forms the root of the word *animal*?

II. "Like Water in Water" (Immanence Is the New Transcendence)

Traditionally, the animal is said to lack language, reason, self-consciousness, and all the other characteristics supposedly unique to humans. This used to be an indication of human superiority, but with the crisis of the anthropocentric worldview beginning in the Enlightenment and reaching its peak around 1900, it came increasingly to be seen as a sign of human inadequacy. The animal world, or the state of animality as such, became coded as a world without difference, as a state of radical immanence. Thus the animal, in Georges Bataille's striking formulation, is seen to be "in the world like water in water" (*Religion*, 19). Such a radical state of immanence is impossible for humans to attain, for it would mean the eradication of the abyss between self and other, the abyss that is bridgeable only through language, but which persists

[9] "Das Widerspiel von Hinüber- und Herüberfließen des 'Fluidums' entspricht dem Ein- und Ausatmen des Hauchs. [...] Denn der 'Hauch' ist nicht nur wie die 'Flut' und das 'Fluidum' die Metapher des Einheitsgefühls mit der Welt, er ist zugleich, und darin liegt seine besondere Gunst, die geborene und erprobte Metapher der Poesie" (Schings 338).

precisely because of language. On the far side of that abyss, outside language, lies what Bataille refers to as "the immanent immensity"—the undiscovered country of immediacy, plenitude, and continuity. The desire to reach that far side is, for Bataille, the ultimate source of religious ritual, particularly the ritual of sacrifice, and of poetry, both of which are for him forms of eroticism (*érotisme*). "Poetry," he writes elsewhere, "leads to the same place as all forms of eroticism—to the blending and fusion of separate objects. It leads us to eternity, it leads us to death, and through death to continuity" (*Erotism*, 25).

The idea of "continuity" for Bataille holds roughly the same status as "Einheit" or "Zusammenhang" does for Hofmannsthal.[10] Individuals, you and I, are "discontinuous beings," and our discontinuity is most apparent in the fact that "If you die, it is not my death" (*Erotism*, 12). Although we are discontinuous beings, we long for a lost continuity, and death represents "continuity of being" (13). Animals, in their state of radical immanence, participate in this continuity of being—which is another way of saying that the animal "is on the side of death" (Derrida *Of Grammatology*, 196). Animality, therefore, is ultimately another word for continuity, and to yearn for continuity thus means to yearn for the experience of animality. In his *Theory of Religion*, Bataille is careful to specify that by regarding animality as purely equivalent to "im-

[10] The consonance of Hofmannsthal's and Bataille's ideas about the dissolving power of ritual violence has been emphasised by Lorna Martens: "Es lohnt sich, Georges Batailles Analyse des Todes und der Erotik in *L'érotisme* heranzuziehen, um Hofmannsthals Verbindung von Tod, Liebe und der Auflösung des Individuums in die Welt zu erklären, besonders da Batailles Formulierung mit Hofmannsthals vereinzelt auftretenden und elliptisch formulierten Theoretisierungen vollkommen in Einklang zu sein scheint" (157–58). Martens goes on to show how the similarities in Hofmannsthal's and Bataille's ideas about the relationship between sacrifice, art, and continuity may be traced back to their reading of Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie*.

mediacy or immanence" he is considering it only "from a narrow viewpoint" which he finds "questionable" but which has a certain utility for his larger analysis (*Religion*, 17). Again, in other words, this has very little to do with *actual* animals, but this conception of animality does map very closely onto what Hofmannsthal refers to as 'das Leben' and of which the animal is likewise the paradigmatic embodiment. The reclamation of the lost state of animality, says Bataille, is the ultimate driving force behind the development of religion, and ritual sacrifice in particular. Sacrifice thus fulfils the same function as *Sprachkritik* does for Fritz Mauthner and poetry does for Hofmannsthal: the search for continuity and oneness.

"Nothing," Bataille insists, "is more closed to us than this animal life from which we are descended"[11] and to try to imagine the world through the eyes of a non-human consciousness is to indulge in the "poetic fallacy of animality." Whereas for Berger the narrow abyss between two humans is bridgeable through language, the abyss separating man from animal requires, indeed *invites*, what Bataille refers to as a "poetic leap" (21).

> The animal opens before me a depth that attracts me and is familiar to me. In a sense, I know this depth: it is my own. It is also that which is farthest removed from me, that which deserves the name depth, which means precisely *that which is unfathomable to me*. But this too is poetry... (22, original italics)

We might go so far as to say that this depth or narrow abyss between human and animal *is* in fact fundamentally the space of poetry, and thus the space inhabited by zo-

[11] We may note here in passing that Kafka's Rotpeter makes a near-identical claim in his report to the academy: "Ihr Affentum, meine Herren, sofern Sie etwas Derartiges hinter sich haben, kann Ihnen nicht ferner sein als mir das meine" (KKAD 300).

opoetics. But this poetry also leads to sacrifice—indeed, for Bataille, "poetry *is* sacrifice" in which "the words are victims,"[12] by which he means that once words are introduced into a poetic context, they are stripped of their utility, of their function as mere means of communication, and deliver us over to the unknown and unknowable. Furthermore, this ability of ours to separate words from their mere utility, frees us from being entirely subservient to such ends. We "sacrifice" words through poetry in order to escape from the world of commerce, utility, and labour which we have created. But such a sacrifice is in and of itself a transaction, based on certain underlying rules: this is what makes it a ritual, rather than mere anarchy. The same is of course true of animal sacrifice: "When the offered animal enters the circle in which the priest will immolate it," Bataille writes, "it passes from the world of things which are closed to man and are nothing to him, which he knows from the outside—to the world that is immanent to it, intimate, known as the wife is known in sexual consum[ma]tion."

> This assumes that it has ceased to be separated from its own intimacy, as it is in the subordination of labor. The sacrificer's prior separation from the world of things is necessary for the return to intimacy, of immanence between man and the world, between the subject and the object. The sacrificer needs the sacrifice in order to separate himself from the world of things and the victim could not be separated from it in turn if the sacrificer was not already separated in advance. The sacrificer declares: "[...] I withdraw you, victim, from the world in which you were and could only be reduced to the condition of a thing, having a meaning that was foreign to your intimate nature. I call you back to the intimacy of the divine world, of the profound immanence of all that is." (*Religion*, 43–44)

[12] Bataille *Inner Experience*, 136. To adapt this definition, zoopoetics would then be the form of sacrifice "où les *animots* sont victimes."

The purpose of the sacrificial act is thus to reconnect the sacrificer with the "immanent immensity" of the divine, i.e. non-objective world. In order to achieve this, the animal to be sacrificed must be removed from the "world of utility," stripped of its "thingness," and encountered as a fellow subject—only in this way can the alienation of the human from the immanent world be temporarily suspended. At the same time, however, the very object-character of the world, man's very alienation from and subjugation of nature is due to a primordial sacrifice of his own animality. The ritual act of sacrifice thus temporarily unites the human and the animal, but ultimately reinscribes the separation wrought by that primary sacrificial economy. As we shall see, this holds true of Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics as well. It remains to be seen whether a non-sacrificial zoopoetics is possible.

III. Metaphor and Anthropocentrism

The idea that the first metaphor was animal is only intelligible within a modern conception of the nature of metaphor. The classical Aristotelian definition of metaphor as merely an improper use of words, deviating from their literal meaning, is useless here. Instead, we must adopt the post-Kantian conception of metaphor as a *primary* form of expression, which views all language as inherently and originally metaphorical in nature.[13] Only in this way can the primary significance of the animal be understood. This understanding of metaphor as a primary form of expression is one of the chief motivating factors behind the *Sprachkrise*. Undoubtedly the most iconic document of this crisis, alongside the *Chandos-Brief*, is Friedrich Nietzsche's treatise

[13] On the development of the concept, see especially Ricœur; Willems; and Zimmer.

Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne (1873). In it, Nietzsche argues that language is nothing but an unreliable set of arbitrary signs with no essential or necessary link to 'reality'—all words, and abstract concepts such as a truth in particular, are simply metaphors that have become so worn down by overuse, that that we have forgotten that they are metaphors. "Wir glauben etwas von den Dingen selbst zu wissen," writes Nietzsche, "wenn wir von Bäumen, Farben, Schnee und Blumen reden und besitzen doch nichts als Metaphern der Dinge, die den ursprünglichen Wesenheiten ganz und gar nicht entsprechen" (KSA I: 880). Nietzsche's critique of language, like Mauthner's, is in many respects a continuation of Kant's critique of knowledge, in that it presupposes the existence of a "Ding an sich" from which language, as inherently metaphorical, deviates.[14] When we talk about Truth, we in fact mobilise "Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen," (KSA I: 880) in other words a series of constructs created by man in order to subjugate the world to his own point of view. According to this anthropocentric worldview, man is the measure of all things. The crisis of language is at once the crisis of anthropocentrism, and of the assurance that the point of view of the human was the only point of view worth having.

Because all language is inherently metaphorical, Nietzsche argues, it is not science but poetry that has a privileged relationship to reality: the scientists ignore or

[14] "Der Wahrheitsbegriff, den Nietzsche hier zugrundelegt, ist [...] korrespondenztheoretisch und zwar in einer sehr strengen, essentialistischen Interpretation, die das jeweilige Wesen eines Dings als Gegenstand eines Begriffs ansetzt. Er könnte ja nicht von Begriffen als Metaphern, d.h. als Abweichungen sprechen, wenn sie nicht von etwas abweichen würden, das er implizit voraussetzt. Dieses Etwas ist die uns unzugängliche Welt, das Kantsche Ding an sich" (Spörl 34).

deny the constructedness of all human experience and all our concepts and profess to offer an objective view of the world.[15] Poets, by contrast, because they traffic first and foremost in metaphor and subjective experience, are in fact far closer to the truth about reality—the truth that there is no truth, in other words—than are the scientists who try to step outside their subjectivity and to think in abstract concepts rather than poetic metaphors and images. Returning for a moment to Bataille's *Theory of Religion*, we may note that his discussion of the unfathomability of the animal is framed in terms of man's futile efforts to strip away the filter of his own consciousness and perceive the world as it 'really' is. "There is only one difference between the absurdity of things envisaged without man's gaze and that of things among which the animal is present," he writes, explaining that "it is that the former absurdity immediately suggests to us the apparent reduction of the exact sciences, whereas the latter hands us over to the sticky temptation of poetry" (22). One of the chief consequences of the prevailing crisis of anthropocentrism was a desperate search for a way out of the "prison-house of language" and into the "Open," which in turn meant a stark increase in the number of writers and artists yielding to that "sticky temptation." The originary metaphoricity of language, coupled with the primary animality of the metaphor, meant that any attempt to escape the boundaries of linguistic consciousness must proceed via the animal, which exists on the boundary of language and mean-

[15] It bears mentioning that Nietzsche is being more than a little reductive here in his characterisation of science as myopically positivist and fundamentally uninterested in metaphor. The problem of language in scientific description was a serious issue at the time, debated, for example, by Ernst Mach, unquestionably one of the most prominent and influential scientists of the time. Mach wrote extensively on the importance of "Gedankenexperimente" and "Ähnlichkeit und Analogie als Leitmotive der Forschung" in his collection *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* (1905).

ing, forever eluding conceptualisation, slipping toward the ineffable. If zoopoetics becomes a hallmark of the literature of this period, in the works of authors such as Rilke, Kafka, Pirandello, and Hofmannsthal, it is because they are each in their own way concerned with the limits of representation and meaning.

Nietzsche's critique of language, like Mauthner's, is fundamentally pessimistic, in that it denounces all language and human knowledge as essentially anthropocentric, but is also critical of metaphysical notions of truth and transcendence, which means that it is effectively impossible to escape this anthropocentrism. By contrast, Alfred Biese, of whose *Philosophie des Metaphorischen* Hofmannsthal published a review in 1894, embraced anthropocentrism as the key to understanding the universe, and in particular by means of metaphor as the essence of the anthropological principle as such: man has no way of perceiving the noumenal world, and must therefore apprehend the world by analogy to himself. This means that symbols and metaphors are the building blocks of all knowledge, they are our "primäre Anschauungsform" (Biese 15), and the analogical principle, which leads man everywhere to perceive himself, 'proves', by a logic of reciprocity, that the universe is ordered according to the same principle. Like Nietzsche and Mauthner—and Hofmannsthal—Biese regards symbol and metaphor as primary forms of perceiving and representing the world—"Die Sprache ist durch und durch symbolisch;" "Die Sprache ist durch und durch metaphorisch," (22)—and it is a mistake to regard metaphoricity as a secondary, improper use of language—"Es ist grundverkehrt, der eigentlichen Bedeutung die uneigentliche als bildliche gegenüberzustellen" (23)—rather, metaphoricity is the anthropological principle as such. Certainly Nietzsche and Mauthner are more scep-

tical with regard to the advantages of the anthropocentric worldview, but they are likewise sceptical of our ability to transcend or abolish it. So why focus on metaphor? Because, essentially, metaphor is language, and language is the defining feature of the human. "Das Metaphorische ist die Ursprache, die Urpoesie," (86) writes Biese—which is why poetics, and even more so: zoopoetics, is concerned with the constitution of the human, specifically in relation and in opposition to the animal.

Hofmannsthal's Zoopoetics

Hofmannsthal's review of Biese is generally positive, and says that the sorts of people who are inclined to appreciate the work of art contained in an idea and the lyric poem implied by a metaphor "werden unglaublich viel darin finden" (GW VIII 191)—the sorts of people, in other words, who are already convinced of Biese's premise that metaphor is by no means an arbitrarily chosen ornament of speech but rather "eine primäre Anschauung" and "die wahre Wurzel alles Denkens und Redens" (190). Biese, in other words, is preaching to the choir, and Hofmannsthal confesses that he had been expecting something different:

> Ich erwartete eine Philosophie der subjektiven Metaphorik; eine Betrachtung des metaphernbildenden Triebes in uns und der unheimlichen Herrschaft, die die von uns erzeugten Metaphern rückwirkend auf unser Denken ausüben, – andererseits der unsäglichen Lust, die wir durch metaphorische Beseelung aus toten Dingen saugen. Eine hellsichtige Darstellung des seltsam vibrierenden Zustandes, in welchem die Metapher zu uns kommt, über uns kommt in Schauer, Blitz und Sturm: dieser plötzlichen blitzartigen Erleuchtung, in der wir einen Augenblick lang den großen Weltzusammenhang ahnen, schauernd die Gegenwart der Idee spüren, dieses ganzen mystischen Vorganges, der uns die Metapher leuchtend und real hinterläßt, wie Götter in den Häusern der Sterblichen funkelnde Geschenke als Pfänder ihrer Gegenwart hinterlassen. (192)

Clearly Hofmannsthal thus not only supports Biese's anthropocentrism, he actually feels Biese isn't being subjective and anthropocentric enough! In this passage we have many of the core notions of Hofmannsthal's 'metaphorology' (cf. Riedel 26–29), starting with the ambivalent status of the metaphor as at once an artificial construct that exerts tyrannical control over our thoughts and actions while at the same time having the power to transport us in a flash out of our narrow, human, linguistic consciousness and into the mystical experience of oneness and continuity. For Hofmannsthal, the language of metaphor is the language of 'life', the world speaks to us in metaphors and symbols, and only metaphors and symbols have the power to reveal its true essence. His reference to man's "metaphernbildenden Trieb" recalls Nietzsche, who in his treatise on truth and lying (which Hofmannsthal could not at the time have read), also refers to a "Trieb zur Metapherbildung," which he describes as "jener Fundamentaltrieb des Menschen, den man keinen Augenblick wegrechnen kann, weil man damit den Menschen selbst wegrechnen würde" (KSA I: 887). For Nietzsche, the concepts out of which man has constructed the rigid and symmetrical fortress that hold him imprisoned are also the products of this fundamental metaphorical drive, and for that very reason he is "in Wahrheit nicht bezwungen und kaum gebändigt": the way out of his prison lies in through art and poetry, in other words through the untrammelled expression of his primal urge to construct metaphors for his experience. This is very close to Hofmannsthal's dual, 'pharmakological' conception of language as both the poison and the cure.

At the end of his review, Hofmannsthal announces his intention of writing a short lively book of his own, "ein ganz unwissenschaftliches Buch, eher ein Gedicht,"

in the form of a dialogue between "zwei oder drei recht moderne[n] junge[n] Menschen" (GW VIII: 192) for whom words are "lebendige Wesen" and who flee from concepts (*Begriffen*) "wie vor großen schwarzen Hunden" (193). The *Gespräch über Gedichte*, which appeared ten years later in the February 1904 issue of the *Neue Rundschau*, may be regarded as the realisation of this project, and stands as the closest Hofmannsthal ever came to formulating a comprehensive theory of metaphor. At the same time, it is unequivocally the most sustained expression of Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics—indeed, as I have said, it is something of a zoopoetic manifesto. The text takes the form of a dialogue between two rather modern young men, Clemens and Gabriel. At first, these two take turns reading poems from Stefan George's *Jahr der Seele*, and discussing their poetic and metaphorical merits. Later, Gabriel reads aloud a poem by Christian Friedrich Hebbel ("Sie sehn sich nicht wieder"), which describes two swans swimming on troubled waters. Clemens asks: "Und diese Schwäne? Sie sind ein Symbol? Sie bedeuten—" but Gabriel interrupts him, saying that "Ja, sie bedeuten, aber sprich es nicht aus, was sie bedeuten: was immer du sagen wolltest, es wäre unrichtig."

> Sie bedeuten hier nichts als sich selber: Schwäne. Schwäne, aber freilich gesehen mit den Augen der Poesie, die jedes Ding jedesmal zum erstenmal sieht, die jedes Ding mit allen Wundern seines Daseins umgibt: [...] Gesehen mit diesen Augen sind die Tiere die eigentlichen Hieroglyphen, sind sie lebendige geheimnisvolle Chiffern, mit denen Gott unaussprechliche Dinge in die Welt geschrieben hat. Glücklich der Dichter, daß auch er diese göttlichen Chiffern in seine Schrift verweben darf (SW XXXI: 79–80)

The poet's prerogative is his ability to make use of these symbols or hieroglyphs in his poems in the *same way* God wrote ineffable things in the world: the swans in

Hebbel's poems do not signify anything that can be expressed in words, which is to say through a set of human relations; they hold the key to the secret, universal truth of the world—"das Weltgeheimnis." This is the first component of Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics. Gabriel is horrified by Clemens's suggestion that the symbolic essence of poetry lies in the way it "setzt eine Sache für die andere" (77). It does no such thing, Gabriel insists: On the contrary, "es ist gerade die Poesie, welche fieberhaft bestrebt ist, die Sache selbst zu setzten." In other words, these swans are not metaphors or symbols in the ordinary sense, because they do not stand *for* anything else. Their meaning can neither be reduced nor translated into something else. They are, as Gabriel puts it, "Chiffern, welche aufzulösen die Sprache ohnmächtig ist." The swans mean "nichts als sich selber" and thus cannot be 'resolved' (*aufgelöst*) by human language into an abstract concept.

"Alles, was den Menschen gegen das Thier abhebt," according to Nietzsche, "hängt von [der] Fähigkeit ab, die anschaulichen Metaphern zu einem Schema zu verflüchtigen,[16] *also ein Bild in einen Begriff aufzulösen*" (KSA I: 881, emphasis added). It is this ability, he explains, which gives rise to a "eine neue Welt von Gesetzen, Privilegien, Unterordnungen, Gränzbestimmungen, die nun der anderen anschaulichen Welt der ersten Eindrücke gegenübertritt, als das Festere, Allgemeinere, Bekanntere, Menschlichere und daher als das Regulirende und Imperativische" (KSA I: 881–82). And it is this ability which has reached crisis point in the *Chandos-Brief*,

[16] It is interesting to note that "Verflüchtigung" is also one of the three capital vices of language (along with "Vergeistigung" and "Vernichtung") mentioned by the lexicographer-poet in Hofmannsthal's *Semele*-fragment, as opposed to the "Thierheit," "Stummheit," and "Unlöslichkeit" of life.

which Hofmannsthal wrote in 1902. The letter, dated 22 August 1603, is from one Philipp Lord Chandos to the great scientist and philosopher Francis Bacon. Chandos is writing to apologise for his recent silence and to explain why he has been forced to abandon his life as a writer. Chandos explains that he has lately undergone a fundamental linguistic crisis, whereby he has completely lost the capacity "über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen" (SW XXXI: 48). Despite this claim, it quickly becomes apparent that far from having lost the ability to say *anything at all* by linguistic means—in which case the finely wrought prose of his letter would constitute a performative contradiction of epic proportions—Chandos has in fact lost only his capacity for abstraction and hence his ability to make rational judgements based on abstract concepts. He explains how he began to experience "ein unerklärliches Unbehagen, die Worte 'Geist', 'Seele' oder 'Körper' nur auszusprechen"—such abstract terms "zerfielen mir im Munde wie modrige Pilze" (48–9). He is overcome with desperate anxiety while trying to explain to his four-year-old daughter why it is important to tell the truth: "die mir im Munde zuströmenden Begriffe [nahmen] plötzlich eine solche schillernde Färbung [an] und [flossen] so ineinander [über]," that he was forced to rush outside and "mich erst zu Pferde, auf der einsamen Hutweide einen guten Galopp nehmend, wieder einigermaßen herstellte" (49). We may note here in passing that the only way to regain control of his faculties is through a demonstration of his mastery over nature, by vigorously riding his horse across the lonely pasture. But gradually his attacks of anguish grow more pervasive and unavoidable, until he is unable to participate even in idle chatter about the moral and economic fortunes and misfortunes of people in the community. Everything seems

"so unbeweisbar, so lügenhaft, so löcherig wie nur möglich," and finally, he writes, everything "zerfiel mir [...] in Teile, diese Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen" (49).

Before his crisis, Chandos writes, he conceived the whole of existence "als eine große Einheit":

> geistige und körperliche Welt schien mir keinen Gegensatz zu bilden, ebensowenig höfisches und tierisches Wesen, Kunst und Unkunst, Einsamkeit und Gesellschaft; in allem fühlte ich Natur, [...] *und in aller Natur fühlte ich mich selber*; wenn ich auf meiner Jagdhütte die schäumende laue Milch in mich hineintrank, die ein struppiges Mensch einer schönen sanftäugigen Kuh aus dem strotzenden Euter in einen Holzeimer niedermolk, so war mir das nichts anderes, als wenn ich, in der dem Fenster eingebauten Bank meines studio sitzend, aus einem Folianten süße und schäumende Nahrung des Geistes in mich sog. Das eine war wie das andere; keines gab dem andern weder an traumhafter überirdischer Natur, noch an leiblicher Gewalt nach, und so ging's fort durch die ganze Breite des Lebens, rechter und linker Hand; *überall war ich mitten drinnen*, wurde nie ein Scheinhaftes gewahr: Oder es ahnte mir, *alles wäre Gleichnis und jede Kreatur ein Schlüssel der anderen*, und ich fühlte mich wohl den, der im Stande wäre, eine nach der andern bei der Krone zu packen und mit ihr so viele der andern aufzusperren, als sie aufsperren könnte. Soweit erklärt sich der Titel, den ich jenem enzyklopädischen Buch zu geben gedachte. (47–8, emphasis added)

The book to which he is referring is an ambitious collection of apophthegms he had planned to write, which, tellingly, was to have been entitled *Nosce te ipsum*. The sense of harmonious oneness with the universe may seem at first glance to be indicative of a certain mysticism, but in fact it is the very epitome of the rational anthropocentric worldview, whereby man is at the centre of the cosmos and perceives only himself wherever he looks. This goes hand in hand with the allegorical interpretation of the world, which sees everything as a cipher for a deeper, transcendent meaning, a nou-

menal reality hidden behind the phenomenal world and which, moreover, man (and man alone) has the capacity to uncover.[17]

It is precisely such a worldview which Hofmannsthal dismisses in a short piece entitled "Bildlicher Ausdruck" published in 1897 in Stefan George's *Blätter für die Kunst*. Hofmannsthal takes issue with the way in which a given work of literature is frequently said to be "reich an Bildern," as if such images and metaphors were mere ornaments superimposed on the essential poetic material of the work, whereas in fact it is the "uneigentliche, bildliche Ausdruck" which is the "Kern und Wesen aller Poesie." And what the poet expresses in metaphors and analogies can never be expressed in any other way. "Die Leute suchen gern hinter einem Gedicht, was sie den 'eigentlichen Sinn' nennen'," Hofmannsthal scathingly writes, comparing such people to "Affen, die auch immer mit den Händen hinter einen Spiegel fahren, als müsse *dort* ein Körper zu fassen sein" (GW VIII: 234). This position on the irreducibility of poetic meaning is an indication of Hofmannsthal's mounting rejection of symbolism in favour of a more starkly modernist conception of the poetic image—

[17] This worldview, moreover, appears to be a quintessentially European or 'Western' trait. In the summer of 1902, immediately before writing the *Chandos-Brief*, Hofmannsthal wrote a number of sketches for a dialogue between a young European and a Japanese nobleman. In one of the fragments, the European remarks that "es ist etwas hinter allem. ich möchte es mit Namen nennen können" (SW XXXI: 43). The Japanese nobleman describes European culture as terrifyingly decrepit, decadent, fragmented; and the Europeans as slaves to their own culture, worshipping their vampiric words and concepts: "Diese Götter sind Begriffe: sie saugen Euch das Blut aus" (42); "Ihr seid das Spiegelbild das einer ansieht, während ein Räuber ihn würgt. Die Worte in denen ihr Euch formuliert, haben die größte Gewalt über Euch." Japanese culture, by contrast, is characterised by harmony, immediacy, authenticity and self-presence. The Japanese are "in sich gegenwärtig," and thus "den Blumen und Thieren verwandt" (42). "Jeder Mensch muss seine wirkliche Welt finden," the Japanese nobleman says: "Ein Weg, sie zu finden, ist wenn man schon einmal gestorben ist" (42).

and, we might add, a more zoopoetic conception of the poetic animal. Henceforth, for Hofmannsthal, 'a swan is a swan is a swan', as it were.

In effect, this transition mirrors Chandos's movement away from a conception of the world as not only harmonious but *comprehensible* to one in which the unity of the cosmos is fundamentally unassimilable to meaning. Hans-Jürgen Schings, in a much earlier essay, locates the definitive expression of Hofmannsthal's rejection of this "false symbolism" ("Allegorie," 555) in his story "Das Märchen der 672. Nacht" (1895), in which the protagonist, a merchant's son, leaves the safe aestheticism of his home and ventures out into the city at night, where he suffers a series of distressing repudiations of his belief in the mystical harmony and beauty of the world, culminating in his death after being kicked by an ugly cavalry horse while attempting to retrieve some jewels he had dropped. In her study of Hofmannsthal's animal symbolism, Helen Frink regards this as a prime example of the way in which "the animals in Hofmannsthal's work resist assimilation into the harmonious flux in which individual consciousness is suspended in blissful oblivious oneness with the universe" (Frink 12). This is certainly true of the sort of "blissful oblivious oneness" that characterises Chandos's pre-critical life—or the life of the merchant's son in the *Märchen*. An index of the horse's incompatibility with the latter's worldview is the repeated emphasis on how ugly (*häßlich*) it is. We see this even more clearly in the *Reitergeschichte* (1899), when sergeant Lerch rides through the nightmarish village and encounters an array of hideous and diseased animals, a "weiße unreine Hündin mit hängenden Zitzen" and two other dogs, the one starving and "von äußerst gieriger Häßlichkeit, dem schwarze Rinnen von den entzündeten Augen herunterliefen,"

the other "ein schlechter Dachshund auf hohen Beinen" (SW XXVIII: 44). Everything about this village and the animals is ugly, ill-proportioned, and fundamentally at odds with the beautiful world—the adjective *schön* recurs at least seven times in the first few pages of the story, in the *Märchen*, the number is even greater—from which Lerch has just come. In this sense, the animals in these texts *do* subvert the characters' worldview, frequently with fatal consequences, and are hence harbingers of the semiotic and existential crisis that befalls Lord Chandos. And yet, in the wake of this "false symbolism" it is the animals' very unassimilability to signification that becomes the key to the new, post-critical zoopoetics of the *Brief* and the *Gespräch*—and here it is not the human figures who must die: it is the animals.

Hofmannsthal uses the terms *Metapher*, *Chiffre*, *Bild*, *Symbol*, and *Hieroglyphe* more or less interchangeably, but always to refer to the ability of poetic language to allow the individual to perceive "den großen Weltzusammenhang": that is to say, in insisting that Hebbel's swans are not metaphors or symbols but rather ciphers or hieroglyphs, it is not because there is a strict distinction to be made between these terms, but rather because he wishes to emphasise the nonconceptuality of these poetic animals. "Wie gern wollte ich dir das Wort 'Symbol' zugestehen," says Gabriel, "wäre es nicht schal geworden, daß mich's ekelt" (SW XXXI: 80). For Hofmannsthal, the way ordinary, everyday speech has worn down and cheapened the original poetic glory of language is a source of profound disgust. In a famous phrase, written in 1895, he declared that people were "müde, reden zu hören. Sie haben einen tiefen Ekel vor den Worten: Denn die Worte haben sich vor die Dinge gestellt" (GW VIII: 479). Language, whether in the form of idle chatter or learned discourse, acts as a

barrier, blocking our access to the things themselves and to 'life' as such. More importantly, even metaphors and symbols have gone stale (*schal*) through overuse.[18]

The feeling of disgust (*Ekel*) accompanies the awareness of one's separation from the continuity of 'life'. Thus, in the play *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin* (1898), one of the characters remarks: "O laßt die Worte weg, sie sind Harpyen, | die Ekel auf des Lebens Blüten streun!" (SW V: 169). And in the first act of the dramatic fragment *Das Leben ein Traum*,[19] the captive prince Sigismund contemplates the body of a dead rat caught in a trap, which has been partially devoured by its fellow rats. "Ich habe immer Mühe mich abzugrenzen," he says, "um mich nicht zu verlieren. Von solchen Thieren aber fühle ich mich verschieden, durch Ekel."[20] And what is disgust, he asks? "Ein Wirbel in mir."[21] All words, he continues, are such vortices

[18] Compare Nietzsche's assertion that truths are nothing but "Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen, die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen in Betracht kommen" (KSA I: 881).

[19] Hofmannsthal began working on this adaptation of Calderón's *La vida es sueño* in the autumn of 1901 and continued, on and off, until after World War I, at which point he finally abandoned the project in favour of his own drama *Der Turm* (1923–28), which exhibits the same basic premise. Hofmannsthal was most intensively engaged with the project between 1902 and 1904, i.e. in the same period as he wrote the *Brief* and the *Gespräch*.

[20] SW XV: 233. Compare Walter Benjamin's vignette "Handschuhe" from his *Einbahnstraße*, which traces the human sense of disgust in the face of the animal back to a primal fear "in der Berührung von ihnen erkannt zu werden. Was sich tief im Menschen entsetzt, ist das dunkle Bewußtsein, in ihm sei etwas am Leben, was dem ekelerregenden Tiere so wenig fremd sei, daß es von ihm erkannt werden könne." Disgust is grounded in the anxiety of being recognised as *familiar* by the animal. Human education consists not in suppressing this feeling of disgust, but in mastering it: "Verleugnen darf er die bestialische Verwandtschaft mit der Kreatur nicht, auf deren Anruf sein Ekel erwidert: er muß sich zu ihrem Herrn machen" (90–91)—which means subduing not only the animal Other, but also the animal part of man himself.

[21] "Alle Worte sind Wirbel die in mir rotierend mich ins Grundlose hinabschauen lassen," he says. This formulation is strikingly similar to Chandos's post-critical experience of words: "Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich; sie gerannen zu Augen die mich anstarrten und in die ich wieder hineinstarren muß: Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindelt, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen

whirling inside him: Sigismund's juxtaposition of words and disgust highlights their analogous function as forces of separation and individuation, and moreover brings this problem once again into contact with the question of the human–animal relationship. Sigismund has trouble maintaining a strict boundary between himself and his surroundings and is at constant risk of losing himself. The tower in which he is imprisoned and the chains that bind him come to represent the shackles of language and signification which prevent him from being free like even the lowliest of animals: "Vögel sind, Iltisse, Ottern, | Mäuse, Würmer, Spinnen, Schlangen, | Alle frei! Ich an der Kette" (SW XV: 13). Why, he asks his warden Clotald, has he taught him the terrible art of speaking and reasoning? "Daß ich eingekerkert hier | Muß verschmachten nach den Dingen, | Sicher, nie sie zu erreichen." He longs to be an animal, "stumm, | Unter unbenannten Dingen" (SW XV: 20), but he is condemned to know the names of things that must forever remain out of his reach.

Gabriel's insistence that the swans in Hebbel's poem signify nothing but themselves is a deliberate negation of the disjuncture of sign and signified, and places them outside the bounds of language as such. In so doing, Gabriel creates a way for poetry to transcend the limits of language: through the figure of the animal. It is therefore doubly significant that language should be incapable of 'resolving' (*auflösen*) Hebbel's swans into an abstract concept. The animal always slips away to-

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und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt." By contrast, at the end of the letter, Chandos describes a different kind of "Wirbel" produced by his new "fieberisches Denken," which is "unmittelbarer, flüssiger, glühender" than words. "Es sind gleichfalls Wirbel," he writes, "aber solche, die nicht wie die Wirbel der Sprache ins bodenlose zu führen scheinen, sondern irgendwie in mich selber und in den tiefsten Schoß des Friedens" (SW XXXI: 54). Which is to say, these vortices are not informed by distance-producing disgust.

ward the ineffable and unknowable. Poetry, according to Gabriel, sees "jedes Ding jedesmal zum erstenmal"—hence each metaphor is also always the first metaphor, and the first metaphor, for Hofmannsthal as well as for Berger, was animal. Thus each poem, each poetic utterance, repeats the primal scene of poetry. And what is the primal scene of poetry? We already know the answer: it is the moment of sacrifice. "Weißt du was ein Symbol ist?" Gabriel asks Clemens. He then continues, seemingly via a non sequitur, to describe the origin of sacrifice.[22] This extraordinary passage is worth quoting at length:

> Weißt du was ein Symbol ist? ... Willst du versuchen dir vorzustellen, wie das Opfer entstanden ist? Mir ist, als hätten wir früher einmal drüber gesprochen. Ich meine das Schlachtopfer, das hingeopferte Blut und Leben eines Rindes, eines Widders, einer Taube. Wie konnte man denken, dadurch die erzürnten Götter zu begütigen? Es bedarf einer wunderbaren Sinnlichkeit um dies zu denken, einer bewölkten lebenstrunkenen orphischen Sinnlichkeit. Mich dünkt, ich sehe den ersten, der opferte. Er fühlte, daß die Götter ihn haßten: [...] Da griff er, im doppelten Dunkel seiner niedern Hütte und seiner Herzensangst, nach dem scharfen krummen Messer und war bereit, das Blut aus seiner Kehle rinnen zu lassen, dem furchtbaren Unsichtbaren zur Lust. Und da, trunken vor Angst und Wildheit und Nähe des Todes, wühlte seine Hand, halb unbewußt, noch einmal im wolligen warmen Vließ des Widders. – Und dieses Tier, dieses Leben, dieses im Dunkel atmende, blutwarme, ihm so nah, so vertraut – auf einmal zuckte dem Tier das Messer in die Kehle, und das warme Blut rieselte zugleich

[22] It is not only Clemens who is confused by this move on Gabriel's part. Critics have also tended to regard this account of the nature of the symbol unhelpful at best and disastrously misleading at worst. Ritchie Robertson, for example, writes that "the dialogue becomes perplexing [...] when Gabriel derives the poetic symbol from sacrifice" (20) and Helen Frink opines that the "attempt to define symbolism in terms of animal sacrifice [...] merely confuses the issue, for instead of explaining the essence or function of symbolism, he explains how it originates. Furthermore, he approaches symbolism not in the comparatively simple form of a symbolic object, but as a symbolic act, that of animal sacrifice" (8). This assessment leads her to make the fateful decision to disregard Hofmannsthal's own sacrificial theory of symbolism in favour of a "comparatively simple" definition borrowed from Alfred North Whitehead. As a result, her study of *Animal Symbolism in Hofmannsthal's Works* fails categorically to address the question of sacrifice, which is so central to Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics.

> an dem Vließ des Tieres und an der Brust, an den Armen des Menschen hinab: und einen Augenblick lang muß er geglaubt haben, es sei sein eigenes Blut; einen Augenblick lang, während ein Laut des wollüstigen Triumphes aus seiner Kehle sich mit dem ersterbenden Stöhnen des Tieres mischte, muß er die Wollust gesteigerten Daseins für die erste Zuckung des Todes genommen haben: er muß, einen Augenblick lang in dem Tier gestorben sein, nur so konnte das Tier für ihn sterben. Daß das Tier für ihn sterben konnte, wurde ein großes Mysterium, eine große geheimnisvolle Wahrheit. Das Tier starb hinfort den symbolischen Opfertod. Aber alles ruhte darauf, daß auch er in dem Tier gestorben war, einen Augenblick lang. Daß sich sein Dasein, für die Dauer eines Atemzugs, in dem fremden Dasein aufgelöst hatte. – Das ist die Wurzel aller Poesie (SW XXXI: 80–81)

Language is powerless to resolve (*auflösen*) the animal-symbol, but it, on the other hand, can dissolve (*auflösen*) us: this, for Hofmannsthal, is the great mystery of poetic language. And once again it is the blood of an animal that makes possible the birth of poetry. What Gabriel is describing here is an ecstatic moment, of dissolution and overflowing, of participation in the existence of another being, of *methexis*. This dissolution of the self, what Freud referred to as the 'oceanic feeling,' is achieved through mimesis and metaphor: the animal dies *for* the man, it *stands for* him, as the man's death is transferred onto the animal. The sacrificial death of the animal metaphorically substitutes for the death of the man. But this metaphorical substitution can only take place because there has been mimetic participation. The animal dies *for* the man, but he too must die *in the animal*, as his existence becomes merged with that of the animal, just as the man's voice becomes merged with the voice of the ram in the ecstatic union of symbolic and literal death.[23]

[23] Gabriel's emphasis on the need for a specific kind of orphic sensuousness (*Sinnlichkeit*) in this primordial scenario of the birth of poetry places it in direct opposition to what is without a doubt the paradigmatic human–ovine encounter in German literature, namely the 'first' man's encounter with the sheep in Herder's treatise on the origin of language. For Herder, the birth of language is attributable

Perhaps the most striking of all the images in the Chandos letter also involves ecstatic participation in the death of an animal: Chandos describes how he had had poison put down in the milk cellar of one of his estates in order to deal with the rat infestation—quite a different image from that of the warm, foaming milk from the beautiful gentle-eyed cow he used to drink. Then one night, in the wake of his linguistic crisis, as he was out riding in the fields, he suddenly became witness, in his mind's eye, as it were ("mir im Innern"), to the "Todeskampf dieses Volks von Ratten." "Alles war in mir," he writes: "die mit dem süßlich scharfen Geruch des Giftes angefüllte kühldumpfe Kellerluft und das Gellen der Todeschreie, die sich an den modrigen Mauern brachen" (51). He tries to find an analogy to his experience in Classical literature, invoking the destruction of Alba Longa and of Carthage, but, he says, "es war mehr, es war göttlicher, tierischer; und es war Gegenwart, die vollste erhabenste Gegenwart." (In fact, for part of his description, Chandos suddenly shifts to the present tense). He sees "eine Mutter, die ihre sterbenden Jungen um sich zucken hatte und nicht auf die Verendenden, nicht auf die unerbittlichen steinernen Mauern, sondern in die leere Luft, oder durch die Luft ins Unendliche hin blickte." He is at a loss for words to express what he experienced when, "in mir die Seele dieses Tieres gegen das ungeheure Verhängnis die Zähne bleckte" (51). It was neither

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solely to man's faculty of reason (*Besonnenheit*), which is unclouded by passion or instinct. Whereas the hungry wolf or the bloodthirsty lion see the sheep as nothing but food—"die Sinnlichkeit hat sie überwältigt!" (55)—and the "brünstige[r] Schaafmann" sees it as nothing but the object of his bestial pleasure, man apprehends the sheep rationally and dispassionately, isolating its defining characteristics and classifying it within his taxonomic system. Hofmannsthal's birth of poetry, by contrast, depends precisely on being overwhelmed by *Sinnlichkeit*, and on the eradication of the specific *Merkmale* that serve to divide the world up into discrete categories. The ram's voice becomes merged with the man's, and, for a moment, he is unable to tell the difference.

pity nor sympathy, Chandos insists, that he felt for the dying rats, but rather "ein ungeheures Anteilnehmen, ein Hinüberfließen in jene Geschöpfe" (51). Pity implies distance, indeed it presupposes a subject/object distinction, which is precisely the distinction which has been dissolved through this oceanic *Hinüberfließen*.

This seemingly harrowing experience is actually one of the "guten Augenblicke" that Chandos tries to describe to Lord Bacon in order to give him a sense of how his life has changed. That is to say, this experience of "ungeheures Anteilnehmen" comes closest to the sense of orderly and harmonious unity that characterised his pre-critical life.[24] These experiences punctuate an existence so entirely "geistlos, ja gedankenlos" in its flow that he fears Lord Bacon will scarcely be able to imagine it.[25] What joyful and stimulating moments he does have, the 'good moments' like the experience with the rats, are impossible for him to put into words. "Denn es ist ja etwas

[24] Monika Fick observes that "Solcher Verschmelzung gegenüber ist die Einheit des früheren Zustands, in dem dem Lord Chandos die körperliche und die geistige Welt keine Gegensätze bildeten und in dem alles Erleben von 'überirdischer Natur' und 'leiblicher Gewalt' zugleich war, eine Lüge. Denn damals bedeuteten ihm die Gegensätze bzw. Ihre Namen etwas; die Trennung ging der Vereinigung voraus" (347). Nevertheless, even the new unity and dissolution of the 'good moments' is predicated on a prior disunity and separation and is therefore ultimately beholden to it.

[25] It is worth noting that these two modes of being that are available to Chandos after his crisis, characterised by insurmountable distance from the world on the one hand and overwhelming closeness—the 'good moments'—on the other, are almost exactly analogous to the contrasting experiences of the world Hofmannsthal had foreseen for the two princes Amgiad and Assad in his adaptation of their story from the *Thousand and One Nights*, which he began in 1895 but never finished. Of the one he writes: "für ihn sind die Wunder des Lebens so durcheinander gewachsen, dass immer eins dem andern den Mund verschliesst. Nicht zu bewältigen erscheint es ihm, grösser als man begreifen kann. Er hat die Gabe des Lebens. [...] es ist dieser der die vielen Abenteuer hat." And of the other: "er sieht das Leben fortwährend harmonisch, aber wie hinter einer Glasscheibe, unerreichbar: das 'gerade ich' τυγχάνω ὤν, kann er mit dem Fall der Ereignisse nicht vereinigen. Fortwährend verwirrt ihn dass dieselben Abenteuer in der Vorstellung und in der Realität so gar nicht zusammenzuhängen scheinen, seine Seele ist nicht ganz im Hades befangen, er sieht gleichsam mit einem halben Auge übers Leben hinaus, wie einer der träumt und dem die reale Welt hineinspielt weil er nicht tief genug schläft" (SW XXIX: 40–41) In Chandos, these two diametrically opposed attitudes towards life are united in one person.

völlig Unbenanntes und auch wohl kaum Benennbares, das, in solchen Augenblicken, irgendeine Erscheinung meiner alltäglichen Umgebung mit einer überschwellenden Flut höheren Lebens wie ein Gefäß erfüllend, mir sich ankündet" (50). Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent: when overwhelmed by this flood of exalted life, Chandos comes close to the state of animality, to being "stumm, unter unbenannten Dingen." Moreover, he is explicit in characterising the experience as at once "göttlicher" and "tierischer" than any ordinary human experience: that is to say, it is informed by radical Presence (*Gegenwart*), not only spatial but also temporal. Animal Being, like divine Being, unfolds in an eternal present. At that moment, as he witnesses, or rather vicariously participates, in the fate of these rats for whose death he himself is responsible, he can, for a moment, transcend the world of discontinuous objects, cross over the narrow abyss into the "immanent immensity" and experience what it is like to be "like water in water."[26] And that is the root of all poetry.

IV. Suitable for Sacrifice?

Sacrifice, writes René Girard, "requires a certain degree of misunderstanding." The sacrificial act, like the metaphor, is a figure of substitution, where the victims must "bear a certain *resemblance* to the object they replace." "But," Girard says, "this resemblance must not be carried to the extreme of complete assimilation, or it would lead to disastrous confusion. In the case of animal victims the difference is always

[26] Jacques le Rider notes that "Les épiphanies qui se révèlent à Chandos relèvent de la 'tautologie mystique'. De l'immédiat de la perception émane un sentiment du sacré" (94). The formulation "like water in water" would seem to describe precisely this sort of 'mystical tautology'.

clear, and no such confusion is possible. Although they do their best to empathize with their cattle, the Nuers never quite manage to mistake a man for a cow—the proof being that they always sacrifice the latter, never the former" (Girard 7–12). According to Gabriel, what gives words and symbols the power to dissolve and to enchant us is the fact that "wir und die Welt nichts Verschiedenes sind" (SW XXXI: 82). The monism at the root of this idea nevertheless reverts to a form of anthropocentric dualism simply by virtue of the fact that instead of sacrificing himself to appease the gods, Gabriel's 'first man' sacrifices an animal. He is the one who experiences the ecstasy of heightened existence while it is the ram that dies. The great mystery of the sacrifice, the enigmatic truth it reveals is the animal's ability to die *for* the man. Its death is symbolic precisely because it *stands in* for the man's own death. And yet, Gabriel insists, the essence of poetry is that unlike ordinary language it never puts one thing instead of another ("Niemals setzt die Poesie eine Sache für eine andere") but only ever the thing itself: "sie spricht Worte aus, um der Worte willen, das ist ihre Zauberei" (81). The parallels to Bataille's sacrificial theory of poetry are obvious: freed from the burden of signification, from their utility as media of communication, the words of a poem are there for their own sake. But for whose sake does the sacrificial act take place? Surely not the victim's.

A fundamental aspect of the "misunderstanding" which Girard attributes to the ritual of sacrifice is that "the celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act" (Girard 7). The sacrificial victim acts as a surrogate for something else which is "unsacrificeable," but the identity of the 'true' victim remains unspoken. In order for a creature or object to be "suitable for sacrifice," it

must be sufficiently similar to the object it replaces to be substitutable for it, but not so similar that it is impossible to tell the difference. In the case of the animal, in order for it to be suitable for sacrifice, it must first be withdrawn from the world of undifferentiated objects, into the realm of language and signification—in other words, it must be brought to the brink of speaking, of saying "I" and thus declaring its presence. Like Mauthner, Hofmannsthal appears to conceive of language as a poison. Mauthner writes that man alone is "krank, vergiftet, entwurzelt in der ungeheuren sprachlosen Natur"—the only way to alleviate man's intolerable solitude is to make the animal a *gift* of language, thus allowing it to 'speak' and absolving the human of the obligation to do so. As Chandos's internal milk cellar fills up with the "süßlich scharfen Geruch des Giftes" and the "Gellen der Todesschreie, die sich an modrigen Mauern brachen," is free to fall silent. While the others scream and thrash about, he may become "die stumme Creatur." He has overcome the feeling of disgust that marked Sigismund's separation from the world: this is underscored by the very fact that these rats—"das prototypische Ekel-Objekt" (Menninghaus *Ekel*, 478)—can serve as the "Gefäß [s]einer Offenbarung," a vehicle for his new "ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein."

Sigismund, for his part is singularly frustrated because he is "vollgestopft mit den eingeklemmten Reizen des Lebens!" (SW XV: 234) but the words and signs he has learnt are incapable of expressing his inner experience. He would like to cover the walls of his prison with representations of his existence, but claims he could never find "die Hieroglyphen, um den ungeheuren Rang meiner Leiden auszudrücken." And so he finds release instead through "eine ungeheuere und symbolische Wollust:

den Mord." In the courtyard of his prison tower there lives a horde of toads: the sight of these creatures, full of "Saft und Leben," is intolerable to Sigismund, and when, at night, he sees two of them copulating, he smashes them indiscriminately with a rock. "Wären sie nicht blöd und stumm, | Fragten etwa sie warum? | Ihr seid lauter Sigismunde, | Ihr elenden, blinden Kröten, | Ich bin Sigsmunds Geschick, | Mich gelüstet's euch zu töten" (14). Before killing the toads, in order for their deaths to be *meaningful* in a way that can grant him release, he first symbolically transfers his identity onto these animals, which conversely allows him to abandon his own subjectivity and become, momentarily, the master of 'his' fate.

> ich muss eine Handlung begehen—nur eine solche entladet mich—bei der ich mich *völlig* hingeben kann; "bei der der arme Sigismund weg und die Welt auch weg ist, und nur der der thut ist da, der ist da und tödtet, tödtet, tödtet! Ekstase! (234)

Symbolic acts allow Sigismund to merge fully ("aufzugehen") with the world, without having to worry about "das quälende 'Wozu'." But he feels the need to explain that "nicht auf das Tödten der Kröten komme es an (daran dürfe er gar nicht denken: er verscharre auch seine Opfer) sondern auf die Ekstase des Tödtens" (234). Here we have Schings's argument about the sacrificial scene in the *Gespräch* in a nutshell: it's not about the sacrifice at all, it's about mystical union with the universe, about ecstasy and oneness and flowing over.[27] Theodor W. Adorno famously took issue with Hofmannsthal's "blutrünstige Theorie des Symbols" for what he saw as its murky political implications (Adorno 234). In his article, Schings lambastes Adorno for the

[27] "Nicht das Töten selbst macht das Symbolische aus—vielmehr die 'Ekstase', die völlige Hingabe, das Aufgehen, die Wollust, die Entladung." (Schings "Lyrik des Hauchs," 316).

"Denkfehler" of equating the sacrificial scene with the *origin* of the symbol, whereas obviously it serves as a mere *example* of the sort of dissolution of the self that is the true essence of the symbol. But in his eagerness to disassociate sacrifice from the origin of poetry, Schings never pauses to consider how it can be self-evident that animal sacrifice be enlisted as a prime example of the sort of dissolution and overflowing that is the 'real' root of all poetry. As I have argued in this chapter, it is misleading at best to disavow the significance of sacrifice and of the animal for Hofmannsthal's poetics, even if—*especially* if—it is Hofmannsthal himself who disavows it. Adorno is completely right in observing that if Gabriel's savage did not actually die, but rather simply slaughtered an animal, "so ist dafür das unverbindliche Opfer des Modernen um so drastischer zu nehmen" (Adorno 234). This sacrifice is non-committal because there is nothing, ultimately, at stake: instead of overcoming the dualism it purports to subvert it actually reinforces it.

The allure of sacrifice is the promise it holds of abolishing or suspending our own finitude. This is even more apparent in the case of animal sacrifice, since animals, because they are said to lack language and self-consciousness, are likewise excluded from the experience of finitude. According to the twisted logic of Western logocentrism, the animal cannot die, because it is incapable of death *as* death, as Heidegger cryptically puts it.[28] And yet, death is the one thing we can be certain we

[28] "Die Sterblichen sind die Menschen. Sie heißen die Sterblichen, weil sie sterben können. Sterben heißt: den Tod als Tod vermögen. Nur der Mensch stirbt. Das Tier verendet. Es hat den Tod als Tod weder vor sich noch hinter sich" (HGA 79 17–18). For an excellent survey of the tradition of excluding the animal from the awareness of death, see Akira Lippit's *Electric Animal*, in which he identifies a "philosophical axiom" that holds that "animals, lacking the capacity for language, also lack the capacity for death: animals lack the ability to experience death as an integral feature of life" (172).

will never experience. Sacrifice appears to offer us the experience of death without the threat of *actually* having to die. The "drift toward or through sacrifice," writes Jean-Luc Nancy,

> is always connected to the fascination with an ecstasy turned toward an absolute Other or toward an absolute Outside, into which the subject is emptied the better to be restored. In this way, the subject is promised, through some mimesis and through some "sublation" of mimesis, methexis with the Outside or the Other ... Western sacrifice corresponds to an obsessive fear of the "Outside" of finitude, however obscure and groundless this "outside" may be. (80)

Chandos's "ungeheures Anteilnehmen" is precisely such a form of methexis. But, and Nancy is extremely emphatic on this point, there is no 'outside' to which the subject might be methectically offered. And, we might add, the ultimate failure of Hofmannsthal's fantasy of overcoming dualism is inscribed within the very structure of sacrifice in which it is grounded.

So the question remains: is a non-sacrificial zoopoetics possible? This will be one of the guiding questions for the chapters that follow, but one potential example might be the figure of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*, namely in his characterisation, in the famous first sentence of the story, as "ein ungeheures Ungeziefer." As Stanley Corngold has indicated, the word "ungeheuer," insofar as it translates the Latin *infamiliaris*, "connotes the creature who has no place in the family," while *Ungeziefer* refers etymologically to "the unclean animal unsuited for sacrifice, the creature without a place in God's order" (Corngold *Introduction*, xix). Thus the figure of Gregor Samsa resists the sacrificial economy into which Hofmannsthal's and Bataille's zoopoetics project the animal: not only is he an Ungeziefer, an animal unsuit-

ed for sacrifice, unacceptable to God, he is also *unfamiliar* (*infamiliaris*). Man does not recognise himself in this animal's gaze—the space it opens up is not *familiar* to us, contrary to what Bataille claims; we do not know this depth. Unlike the four-legged, warm-blooded, animal Others conjured up by their imaginations and sacrificed for the purposes of flowing over into the immanent immensity, Samsa's many-legged, cold-blooded verminous insect is *wholly Other*, his death cannot serve as a conduit to deeper meaning and a feeling of mystical oneness with the universe. His death can mean nothing.

Words are for those with promises to keep.

—W. H. Auden, "Their Lonely Betters" (1950)

Chapter 2

A Lick and a Promise

Rilke's Anthropocynic Encounters

I. "Wie ein Hund"

In a letter to his wife Clara dated 23 October 1907, Rainer Maria Rilke describes the profound impression a self-portrait by the painter Paul Cézanne has made on him. He praises the uncompromising objectivity with which the artist has rendered his own likeness: "mit so viel demütiger Objektivität [...], mit dem Glauben und der sachlich interessierten Teilnahme eines Hundes, der sich im Spiegel sieht und denkt: da ist noch ein Hund" (*Briefe*, 206). It's an extraordinary image—but what does it mean? This is not the first time in these letters on Cézanne that Rilke compares the artist to a dog. In an earlier letter, dated 12 October, he tells Clara of a conversation with the painter Mathilde Vollmoeller, who sometimes accompanied him on his almost daily visits to that year's Salon d'Automne, which included the first major posthumous retrospective of Cézanne's works following his death the previous year. "Denk Dir aber mein Erstaunen," says Rilke, "als Fräulein V., ganz malerisch geschult und schauend, sagte: 'Wie ein Hund hat er davorgesessen und einfach geschaut, ohne alle Nervosität und Nebenansicht'" (185). Yet it is not the strangeness of this analogy which surprises Rilke so much as its familiarity: just three days earlier he himself had compared Cézanne to an old dog, whose master is his work, to which

he remains faithful and devoted even though it starves and beats him and won't let him rest.[I] But Rilke's image is conventional compared to Vollmoeller's: the former is one of fidelity and subservience, the archetypal attributes of dogs, whereas the latter involves a particular way of seeing the world and of representing it in a radically new form of art. On the one hand this new canine art has to do with a way of looking, and on the other with a way of painting in a personal, honest way that uses the paint to create a real object: "Die Farbe geht völlig auf in dessen Verwirklichung; es bleibt kein Rest" (185).

Cézanne painted only what he "knew," Vollmoeller told Rilke, which is to say only that which offered itself to his dog-like gaze, and which he would then "say," without adding anything to this objective pictorial utterance. "'Hier', sagte sie, auf eine Stelle zeigend, 'dieses hat er gewußt, und nun sagt er es (eine Stelle an einem Apfel); nebenan ist es noch frei, weil er das noch nicht gewußt hat. Er machte nur, was er wußte, nichts anderes.' 'Was muß er für ein gutes Gewissen haben', sagte ich" (185). This little play on words (*gewußt*/*Gewissen*) reveals something about Rilke's

[I] "Und sitzt im Garten wie ein alter Hund, der Hund dieser Arbeit, die ihn wieder ruft und ihn schlägt und hungern läßt" (*Briefe*, 180). Rilke was fond of such canine analogies—particularly, it seems, when describing writers and artists. In September 1905, Rodin invited him to visit him at his house in Meudon, and Rilke describes how the sculptor greeted him "wie ein großer Hund [...] wiedererkennend mit tastenden Augen, befriedigt und still" (109). The following year, when George Bernard Shaw came to Paris to sit for Rodin, Rilke asked Elisabeth von der Heydt if she was familiar with his work, adding that Shaw was "stolz auf seine Arbeiten, wie Wilde oder Whistler, aber ohne deren Prätension, wie ein Hund stolz ist auf seinen Herren" (qtd. in Schoolfield "Rilke's Ibsen," 466). Two years later, in a letter to Clara from the 3rd of October, 1907, Rilke describes a self-portrait by Van Gogh in which the artist "sieht dürftig und gequält aus, verzweifelt fast, aber doch nicht katastrophal: wie wenn es ein Hund schlecht hat. Und hält sein Gesicht hin und man sieht, sachlich, daß er es schlecht hat Tag und Nacht" (qtd. in Schneider *Verheißung*, 81n108). This last image of the dog proffering its face recalls Rilke's poem "Der Hund," written a few months previously, and his short prose text, *Eine Begegnung*, also written in 1907, of which more at the end of this chapter.

conception of artistic integrity and the moral dimension of this canine objectivity, which would allow us to extend the chain of associations to include *Bewußtsein* and *Selbstbewußtsein*. Human rational self-consciousness, as a form of knowing that continually extends beyond itself, subjectively filling in gaps in knowledge and the sensory data, inevitably gives rise to an excess or a superfluity that no longer corresponds to the objective world. To Rilke, this form of anthropomorphic projection does violence to the things themselves and therefore must inevitably result in a guilty conscience. The only way to make art with a clear conscience is to abandon such subjective supplementation. Cézanne, Vollmoeller observed, was able to use always exactly the right amount of paint for a given object: "Es ist wie auf eine Waage gelegt: das Ding hier, und dort die Farbe; nie mehr, nie weniger, als das Gleichgewicht erfordert. Das kann viel oder wenig sein: je nachdem, aber es ist genau, was dem Gegenstand entspricht" (185). There is an exact correspondence between the physical object and its mimetic representation, which, consequently, is not truly mimetic at all: the representation *is* the object, or rather, it is a thing in its own right, not an object subordinate to a subject or a real-world referent. Thus, Cézanne's canine gaze sees in the mirror not its own image but rather "another dog," freed from the dependency of mimesis and instead an autonomous, self-contained entity.

It is easy to see how this would be appealing to Rilke as a model of artistic production. Ever since his first experience of Paris in 1902, and his intensive apprenticeship as Rodin's secretary, Rilke had been in search of just such a poetics of exact correspondences, that could create or shape the things themselves with words, so that the words were the things themselves. In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé from

the summer of 1903, Rilke had expressed his desperate need to find the right tools—"den Hammer, meinen Hammer"—with which to ply his craft: "Irgendwie muß auch ich dazu kommen, Dinge zu machen; nicht plastische, geschriebene Dinge, – Wirklichkeiten, die aus dem Handwerk hervorgehen."[2] Rilke's ambition to create actual things with words led him to abandon his earlier, somewhat overwrought language in favour of the more objective, detached style of the *Neue Gedichte*, written between 1903 and 1908, mostly in Paris.[3] Rilke's desire for this new, objective language went hand in hand with the project of 'learning to see' (*Sehenlernen*) that he describes in the semi-autobiographical novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), written, with frequent interruptions, during the same period. *Sehenlernen* is conceived as a propaedeutic exercise leading to the kind of "sachliches Sagen" that Rilke identified in Cézanne's works: a wholly a-subjective, non-reflexive, anti-impressionistic perspective on the world, that records not the impression made by a given object or scene on the observer, but rather seeks to grasp the universal,

[2] Rilke/Andreas-Salomé 105. Cf. Wodtke 67–69. On Rilke's attempts to implement the techniques he learnt from Rodin in his own work, see Dürr. On Rilke and Cézanne, see especially Gerok-Reiter. The body of criticism on Rilke's relationship to the visual arts more generally is vast, but for concise accounts see Karl E. Webb's and Helen Bridge's essays on "Rilke and the Visual Arts" in *A Companion to the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke* and in the *Cambridge Companion to Rilke*, respectively.

[3] In a letter to Baron Jakob von Uexküll dated 19 August 1909, Rilke reacts to the great ethologist's criticism of the *New Poems*' "harte[] Sachlichkeit und Ungefühlsmäßigkeit," insisting on the absolute necessity of this new, objective style and professing his clear conscience: "Wesentlicher scheint es mir, daß ich Ihnen, was jene neueren Bücher angeht, *mein gutes, klares Gewissen* zusichern kann: jedes Wort, jeder Wortzwischenraum in jenen Gedichten ist mit äußerster Notwendigkeit entstanden, unter dem Bewußtsein jener endgültigen Verantwortlichkeit, unter deren innerem Gericht meine Arbeit sich vollzieht" (*Briefe*, 245, emphasis added). Uexküll would later praise Rilke's poem "Der Panther" for the "meisterhaft[e]" "Beobachtung, die Sie dort entwickeln," noting that he clearly has "ein hervorragendes Talent für Biologie und speziell für die vergleichende Psychologie" (qtd. in Herwig 559–60).

material essence of objects in the world through an unblinking gaze that does not filter out that which is deemed repulsive or frightening, but rather see in those things only "das Seiende [...], das, mit allem anderen Seienden, *gilt*."[4] It involves "a perpetual struggle not only to reconcile multiplicity with unity, but more fundamentally, to reconcile vision and object" (Bridgwater 31). In another letter, Rilke reflects on his earlier way of looking, which had informed the poems in his *Stundenbuch* (1899–1903): "damals war mir die Natur noch ein allgemeiner Anlaß, eine Evokation, ein Instrument, in dessen Saiten sich meine Hände wiederfanden; ich saß noch nicht vor ihr."[5] Cézanne, by contrast, "hat [...] *davor*gesessen und einfach geschaut"—"wie ein Hund". Learning to see like Cézanne means learning to see *like a dog*.

Rilke's search for a new way of seeing springs from a fundamental diffidence in the ability of language to describe reality. It is, in other words, a response to the *Sprachkrise* and, like so many of his contemporaries, Rilke turned to the animal for a way out of this crisis. In this chapter I will explore the role played by animals in Rilke's poetics, particularly in his middle and late period, i.e. from the period of *Malte Laurids Brigge* and the *Neue Gedichte* up to and including the *Duineser Elegien*, in

[4] Letter to Clara Rilke, 19 October 1907 (*Briefe*, 195 [original italics]). Compare fragment no. 22 of *Malte* ("Ein Briefentwurf," WA 11: 775), in which this phrase is repeated verbatim.

[5] Letter to Clara Rilke, 13 October 1907 (*Briefe*, 187; cf. Wilke "vor/nach Cézanne"). It may appear self-contradictory that Rilke should strive to take up a position "before" or "in front of" nature when later, in the *Duino Elegies* especially, he will lament mankind's fate of "gegenüber sein | und nichts als das und immer gegenüber," which is to say always occupying a subject position and encountering the rest of the world as a series of discontinuous objects or "Gegenstände" rather than being fully *in* the world (like water in water, in other words). But, as we will see later in this chapter, the auto-extraction Rilke is describing here is in fact a preliminary step away from the kind of narcissistic anthropocentrism whereby all of nature serves as a hall of mirrors in which man encounters only himself, just as in Chandos's pre-critical conception of nature as "eine große Einheit" in which all was "Gleichnis und jede Kreatur ein Schlüssel der anderen."

which he first formulated the idea of "das Offene" as a rarefied sphere of fullness and immanence, which only non-human animals can see. The Open is the world as it "really" is, without the distorting lens of language; it is what lies on the other side of the "narrow abyss" between man and animal. In this, Rilke's conception of the animal is similar to Hofmannsthal's and Bataille's, meaning that it is essentially Nietzschean.[6] The animal, because it lacks language and self-consciousness, is fully *in* the world (like water in water), in a way that is wholly inaccessible to humans. The animals in Rilke's poetry—the panther, the black cat, the gazelle, the flamingos, etc.—represent absolute otherness, allowing them to be transformed into purely aesthetic *Kunstdinge*.[7]

Dogs, by contrast, occupy a far more ambivalent place in Rilke's poetics, because, unlike other animals, whose world is entirely closed to man, theirs is "eine verwandte Welt" (WA 11: 756). They invariably seek interaction with humans; they offer us their gaze, extending their "museau nostalgique" (WA 11: 1099) into the

[6] Cf. Ulrich Baer: "Rilkes Auffassung vom Tier stammt zweifellos von Nietzsche" (190). This indebtedness to Nietzsche—summed up in Eric Heller's pithy statement that "Rilke, however, is the poet of a world, the philosopher of which is Nietzsche" (137)—has led some scholars to view the poet's ideas as essentially derivative. Baer cites the Swiss scholar Wolfram M. Fues as saying that Rilke's insights into the human–animal relationship and the difference between subject and object are "im Grunde nicht neu." "Selbstredend ist dieser Satz nur eine Finte," comments Baer in a footnote: "Fues spielt dann die Dichtung gegen die Philosophie aus. Bei solchen Spielen gewinnt meist niemand" (190n4).

[7] Karl-Heinz Fingerhut notes that there is no essential difference between the way Rilke looks at an animal and how he encounters a work of art: "Der Dichter sieht in den Naturgegenständen schon während des 'Werks des Gesichts' die Stilisierung einer künstlerischen Intention, mit der er sich dann in seiner dichterischen Neugestaltung auseinandersetzt. Diese Tatsache beweist, wie wenig Rilke ein 'Dichter der Tiere' ist, den das Tier als Naturwesen beschäftigt. Er betrachtet die ihm begegnenden Kreaturen stets, als seien sie Kunstwerke, die im Material von Leben und Bewegung ausgeführt wurden und die als solche einem Kunstwerk aus Stein oder Farbe vergleichbar sind" (*Das Kreatürliche*, 165).

human "interpreted" world. In this way, they appear as messengers from beyond the "narrow abyss," and hold the promise of bridging the gap. At the same time, this promise is tinged with melancholy, because while Rilke is desperately seeking a way out of the prison house of language, the dog seems to want to be let in. This creates a feeling of responsibility in Rilke, which he feels reluctant and ill equipped to live up to. The dog's proximity to man is the result of a sort of "pact" between man and dog, whereby man's sovereignty and mastery as the only animal that has language is confirmed by the dog's silent subservience and admiration. In the wake of the *Sprachkrise*, Rilke no longer feels worthy of such admiration, but he is powerless to dissolve the "pact." This ambivalent relationship is perfectly encapsulated in a short prose text entitled "Eine Begegnung," which I will discuss text the end of this chapter.

II. Rilke's Zoopoetics

Rilke's letters on Cézanne have long been regarded as a manifesto of Rilke's poetics, specifically of his transition from his early to his middle period. It is striking, however, how few scholars seem to acknowledge the significance of animality, and of the figure of the dog in particular, to Rilke's new mode of seeing and writing—that these letters are, in effect, a *zoopoetic manifesto*.[8] At the end of the 13 October letter, which

[8] A notable exception here is Filippo Fimiani's somewhat exuberant and idiosyncratic article, "Portrait of the Artist as an Old Dog," in which he reads Rilke's letters on Cézanne as an affirmation "of the animality of painting as such" (116), placing them in relation to Franz Marc's proclamation of the "Animalisierung der Kunst" a few years later. (Marc, too, was in Paris in 1907, though not, contrary to what Fimiani claims, at the same time as Rilke.) Marc's desire for artistic renewal through the search for a non-anthropomorphic, zoocentric perspective presents a clear parallel to Rilke's striving for a

features the first reference to Cézanne's "sachliches Sagen," Rilke points to 'Die Gazelle' (one of the *Neue Gedichte*, written that summer) as an example of a poem exhibiting "instinktive Ansätze zu ähnlicher Sachlichkeit." It is thus important to note that the project of *Sehenlernen* and the practice of "sachliches Sagen" is at every stage conceived in terms of the animal: from the non-reflexive, objective dog-like gaze, to the gazelle, which at first is presented as utterly unassimilable to language ("wie kann der Einklang zweier | erwählter Worte je den Reim erreichen, | der in dir kommt und geht, wie auf ein Zeichen," WA 2 506), but is then completely transformed into its poetic equivalent ("alles Deine geht schon im Vergleich | durch Liebeslieder").

This remainderless transformation of the object seen "like a dog" into an artistic object in its own right ("another dog"), is achieved by means of an artistic process that is entirely physiological, and which takes place *inside* the dog. Painting, Rilke writes, is something that happens "unter den Farben," and the less an artist is able to say about his intentions or the concepts behind the work, the better, since any interposition of reflexion or conscious will can only spoil the organic process. And this process, the interaction of the different colours on the canvas (and, by analogy, of the words on the page) is likened to the interaction of enzymes and saliva—the "Drüsenwirkung"—in the mouth of a dog:

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holistic, non-subjective poetic language, and indeed, Rilke appears to have been greatly impressed by his visit to the memorial exhibition of Marc's work in Munich following the artist's death at Verdun, writing enthusiastically to Marianne Mitford (later von Goldschmidt-Rothschild) on 28 September 1916 that no-one could have foreseen how important it would be: "endlich wieder einmal ein Œuvre, eine im Werk erreichte und errungene Lebens-Einheit und welche seelige, unbedingte, reine" (qtd. in Lankheit 42). On Rilke's relationship to Marc, see especially Luke Fischer's essay on "Animalising Art."

> Alles ist [...] zu einer Angelegenheit der Farben untereinander geworden: eine nimmt sich gegen die andere zusammen, betont sich ihr gegenüber, besinnt sich auf sich selbst. Wie im Mund eines Hundes bei Annäherung verschiedener Dinge verschiedene Säfte sich bilden und bereit halten: zustimmende, die nur umsetzen, und korrigierende, die unschädlich machen wollen: so entstehen im Innern jeder Farbe Steigerungen oder Verdünnungen, mit deren Hilfe sie das Berührtwerden durch eine andere übersteht.[9]

The dog's palate becomes the artist's palette, as it were: the salivary glands secrete various "juices" that break down and translate ("übersetzen") the object so perfectly into its "malerischen Äquivalente" that there is no remainder. The object, placed on the artist's scales along with the paint until a perfect equilibrium is found, emerges, transformed, to begin a new existence, "in einem Jenseits von Farbe [...], ohne frühere Erinnerungen."[10] The object emerges into this new state of perfect aesthetic equivalence without any mnemonic remainder to tie it to its previous incarnation. At the same time, it is stripped of any use-value it might have carried in the everyday material world. Thus, writes Rilke, the fruit in Cézanne's paintings no longer carries any trace of edibility: "Bei Cézanne hört ihre Eßbarkeit überhaupt auf, so sehr dinghaft wirklich werden sie."[11]

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[9] Letter to Clara Rilke, 22 October 1907 (*Briefe*, 204).

[10] Letter to Clara Rilke, 18 October 1907 (*Briefe*, 194).

[11] Letter to Clara Rilke, 8 October 1907 (*Briefe*, 176). We can see how this process is analogous to Bataille's principle of 'poetry as sacrifice' described in the previous chapter, whereby the sacrificial victim, or the poetic word, is removed from the world of utility, stripped of its thingness, which is to say of any meaning "foreign to [its] intimate nature," and called back to the "intimacy of the divine world, of the profound immanence of all that is" (*Religion*, 44). Clearly, "thingness" means something quite different to Bataille than it does to Rilke—the exact opposite, in fact: for Rilke, becoming "dinghaft wirklich" entails precisely the elimination of that which Bataille considers "thingly," namely its status as an object subordinate to a subject. Rilke's "things" are effectively modelled on the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*, entirely self-contained in a non-relational, ideal form, but nevertheless grounded in their materiality.

In her essay, "The Colors of Prose," Anette Schwarz writes compellingly about the ingestive/digestive model of poetry laid out in Rilke's letters on Cézanne, but blithely disregards the significance of the dog in the intermediate stage between "consumption" and "nonconsumption" (i.e. the inedibility of Cézanne's fruit). "Surprisingly," she writes, "this stage occurs precisely in that organ of taste through which every saying, including that of *sachliches Sagen*, has to pass: the mouth, *which in this case happens to be that of a dog.*"[12] Schwarz leaves entirely unproblematised the question of how (and more importantly why) this "sachliches Sagen" is supposed to pass through the mouth of a dog, a mute animal.

And yet this very silence is itself connected to what Schwarz herself identifies as "one of the most important premises of Cézanne's ideal of artistic perception,

[12] Schwarz 196 (emphasis added). Schwarz reads Rilke's "sachliches Sagen" in terms of Freudian and post-Freudian theories of melancholia. Strangely, however, she at no point comments on the significance of the dog as the traditional symbol of melancholy, most emblematically in Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I*—a link explored in greater detail by Alice A. Kuzniar in her book *Melancholia's Dog*.

Schwarz focuses especially on Julia Kristeva's concept of the "melancholic wound," which is defined as "one that does not close since it belongs to the constitution of the subject as a linguistic being." "For Kristeva," Schwarz explains, "the developmental stage for the occurrence of this wound is the preoedipal separation between mother and infant and the beginning of an autonomous speaking subject. The separation from the mother and the concomitant loss of immediate oral satisfaction wounds the 'primitive self,' leaving it 'incomplete' and 'empty.' This emptiness represents the wound that each speech act, attempting to substitute for the absence of the mother with words, seeks to fill and close. The melancholic emptiness opens first in the mouth that wants to close the wound with each and every word" (206). Although Schwarz does not mention this in her essay, Kristeva's linguistic theory of melancholia could be productively related to Rilke's fixation on the "Schooß" as the lost interiority and wholeness of the Open, and of *Weltinnenraum*: birds and insects, because they were not "herangereift" inside the mother's body, and have consequently never been separated from the mother by being born, continue to live 'in' the womb, as it were; the whole world is their "Schooß" and so they do not suffer the primordial separation that afflicts mammals and humans in particular (WA 11: 1074–76; cf. Riedel 196–208). In general, it seems odd that Schwarz should entirely ignore the status of the animal and of "the Open" as the strived-for place, seen by animals and inhabited by angels, where precisely this "open wound" is closed—alternatively, one might instead view the very concept of "the Open," tinged as it is with a melancholy, elegiac longing for a lost state of wholeness and presence, as a symptom of that "open wound" of language.

namely 'forgetting'" (Schwarz 197). Just as the aesthetic 'thing' emerges from this oral process "ohne frühere Erinnerungen," for Cézanne it was imperative that the artist forget all preconceptions and prior knowledge of the world, in order to strip away all traces of subjectivity and self-consciousness and paint only what appeared before him: "Toute sa volonté doit être de silence. Il doit faire taire en lui toutes les voix des préjugés, oublier, oublier, faire silence, être un écho parfait" (Gasquet 109).[13] Thus "sachliches Sagen" is predicated upon a prior act of forgetting, a silencing of all prejudice and of all conscious, subjective *will* that might interfere with the artistic act. "Der Maler dürfte nicht zum Bewußtsein seiner Einsichten kommen (wie der Künstler überhaupt)" writes Rilke on 21 October 1907: "ohne den Umweg durch seine Reflexion zu nehmen, müssen seine Fortschritte, ihm selber rätselhaft, so rasch in die Arbeit eintreten, daß er sie in dem Moment ihres Übertritts nicht zu erkennen vermag" (*Briefe*, 201). The artist's insight must bypass reflection: even when he looks in the mirror, the artist-dog must not see himself. Only then can the artist begin to create something true and original. This eschewal of reflexivity and self-consciousness makes it impossible to speak clearly and coherently about one's own

[13] Supposedly written in the winter 1912–13, six years after Cézanne's death and many more after their friendship had ended, Gasquet's "imaginary conversations," as he called them, are notoriously problematic, mixing the authentic with the highly apocryphal and tendentious. Hence his book holds roughly the same status in Cézanne studies as Gustav Janouch's *Conversations with Kafka* does in Kafka studies. Nevertheless, the importance of "forgetting" for Cézanne is sufficiently well established in other sources to be considered central to his ideal of artistic perception. See, for example, Vukićević 23–24, and also Gerok-Reiter 504.

Once the artist has become sufficiently forgetful and silent to be a perfect echo, "Alors, sur sa plaque sensible, tout le paysage s'inscrira," indicating that Cézanne himself conceived of the process in quasi-photographic, rather than animalistic or even organic, terms. This machinic silence and radical impassivity are, in turn, the ideal state of being to which Pirandello's cameraman Serafino Gubbio aspires, who, fittingly, falls silent (*fait silence*) at the end of the novel, having attained a level of perfect objectivity.

artistic goals and intentions. Thus, for instance, the fact that van Gogh's letters are so easy to read, Rilke writes, the fact that there is so much in them, "spricht im Grunde gegen ihn, wie es ja auch gegen den Maler spricht [...], daß er das und das wollte, wußte, erfuhr" (201). Cézanne, by contrast, found it almost impossible to speak about his work: "Fast nichts konnte er sagen" (202).[14] Rilke concludes the letter with the stark pronouncement that "Alles Gerede ist Mißverständnis"—as clear an expression of his own *Sprachskepsis* as he ever made.

Into the Open

Though perhaps less violently expressed than Hofmannsthal's, Rilke's crisis of language likewise centred on the disjuncture between words and things, and particularly on the deadening effect words had on the world, stripping it of its wonder.[15] In a famous early poem written in 1897 and published two years later in the collection *Mir zur Feier*, Rilke professed his fear of human language because it expresses everything so clearly:

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[14] Rilke does not appear to have regarded his own voluminous correspondence, in which he wrote a great deal about his artistic process and ideas, as a blot on his own artistic integrity, however.

[15] On the problem of language in Rilke's poetry, see the articles by F. W. Wodtke and R. Sheppard. Both argue that Rilke never truly underwent a comparable crisis to Hofmannsthal's, but in doing so they tend to conflate Hofmannsthal with the fictional Lord Chandos. This was of course a staple of Hofmannsthal scholarship until very recently, but it is highly doubtful that Hofmannsthal *himself* ever experienced first-hand the existential and linguistic crisis described in his famous letter. Sheppard's article even bears the subtitle "Rilke's Chandos Crisis," whereas a more apt comparison would surely have been *Malte* and Chandos—and indeed, the *Aufzeichnungen* are very explicitly a document of a crisis of language and identity, and it is thus fully justifiable to read the novel as a response to the *Sprachkrise* as well. Moreover, there are substantial parallels between Rilke's and Hofmannsthal's poetics, as I indicate in this chapter, specifically with regard to the former's notion of the Open and Chandos's 'good moments', even (albeit in fundamentally different ways) in the way each tries to assimilate death to the wholeness of being.

> Ich fürchte mich so vor der Menschen Wort
> Sie sprechen alles so deutlich aus:
> Und dieses heißt Hund und jenes heißt Haus,
> und hier ist Beginn und das Ende ist dort. (WA I: 194)

In the final stanza of the same poem, seemingly in apostrophe to the words themselves, the young Rilke declares that he enjoys hearing things "sing" ("Die Dinge singen hör ich so gern"), but that people, in touching them with language, render the things stiff and mute, effectively killing them: "Ihr rührt sie an: sie sind starr und stumm | Ihr bring mir alle Dinge um." These human words are thus implicitly opposed to the Romantic magic words, such as the *Zauberwort* in Joseph von Eichendorff's celebrated 1838 poem "Wünschelruthe," which, if found, could awaken the song lying dormant in all things.[16] It is debatable to what extent Eichendorff himself actually believed in the existence of such magic words, but certainly by the time Hofmannsthal and Rilke were writing their first, post-Romantic poems—Hofmannsthal's invocations of "Sprachmagie" and "grenzenloser Zauber" notwithstanding—any hope of finding the magic formula to re-enchant the world had given way to a melancholy and ultimately hopeless yearning for an experience of reality that is not mediated by language and consciousness and therefore not characterised by fragmentation and differentiation, but rather whole, limitless, and immediate.

Much like Hofmannsthal, Rilke participates in the "intense modernist longing" to transcend "into a pure realm of writing that would leave all contingency behind and overcome all splits and fissures of subjective perception and articulation"

[16] "Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen, | Die da träumen fort und fort, | Und die Welt hebt an zu singen, | Triffst du nur das Zauberwort" (Eichendorff 328).

(Huyssen "Notebooks," 78–79). Like the language that Chandos imagines, in which "die stummen Dinge" speak to him and in which he may one day be called upon to defend himself "vor einem unbekannten Richter" (SW XXXI: 54), Rilke's dream of a new, inviolate language of presence and truth—specifically as articulated in Malte Laurids Brigge's prophecy of the "Zeit der anderen Auslegung" (WA 11: 756)—is essentially messianic in nature, a fact which has led Andreas Huyssen to dismiss it as "aesthetic theology." This new language of perfect equivalences—the language of presence and unity and fullness and truth—is represented in Rilke by the figure of the angel, and it is an angelic language to which Rilke aspires.[17] But just as Chandos describes his experience of plenitude and presence as both more divine and more animal (*göttlicher, tierischer*) than ordinary experience, the transcendence inherent in Rilke's angelology applies to the realm of the animal as well: specifically to what, in the eighth *Duino Elegy*, Rilke calls "the Open," which is inhabited by the angels and which all animals *except man* gaze out upon:

> Mit allen Augen sieht die Kreatur
> das Offene. Nur unsre Augen sind
> wie umgekehrt und ganz um sie gestellt
> als Fallen, rings um ihren freien Ausgang.
> Was draußen *ist*, wir wissens aus des Tiers
> Antlitz allein; denn schon das frühe Kind
> wenden wir um und zwingens, daß es rückwärts
> Gestaltung sehe, nicht das Offne, das
> im Tiergesicht so tief ist. Frei von Tod.
> *Ihn* sehen wir allein; das freie Tier

[17] "Diese, nicht mehr von Menschen aus, sondern im Engel geschaute Welt ist vielleicht meine wirkliche Aufgabe," wrote Rilke to Ellen Delp on 27 October 1915, "aber, um die zu beginnen, Ellen, wie müßte einer beschützt und beschlossen sein!" (*Briefe*, 509–510, cf. Wodtke 73). I will return to the importance of "beginning" for Rilke's poetics later in this chapter.

> hat seinen Untergang stets hinter sich
> und vor sich Gott, und wenn es geht, so gehts
> in Ewigkeit, so wie die Brunnen gehen.
> *Wir* haben nie, nicht einen einzigen Tag,
> den reinen Raum vor uns, in den die Blumen
> unendlich aufgehn. Immer ist es Welt
> und niemals Nirgends ohne Nicht: das Reine,
> Unüberwachte, das man atmet und
> unendlich *weiß* und nicht begehrt. Als Kind
> verliert sich eins im Stilln an dies und wird
> gerüttelt. Oder jener stirbt und ists.
> Denn nah am Tod sieht man den Tod nicht mehr
> und starrt *hinaus*, vielleicht mit großem Tierblick. (WA 2: 714)

The animal sees the world as it is in its essence, without the intermediary of language and consciousness: because their consciousness has not undergone the same "eigentümliche Wendung und Steigerung" that our human consciousness has, animals are fully *in* the world, "like water in water," in other words: "das Tier ist *in* der Welt; wir stehen *vor ihr*."[18] The only way we can 'see' the Open is by the way it is reflected in the animal's face, "des Tiers | Antlitz"—a somewhat unusual choice of word, as the archaic "Antlitz" is generally reserved for phrases such as "das Antlitz Gottes," but a very deliberate one, since besides accentuating the intersection between animality and divinity, it also emphasises the oppositionality of the animal, since etymologically *ant-litz* refers to "das Entgegenblickende" (Kluge)—that which

[18] Letter to Lev. P. Struve, 25 February 1926 (qtd. in Fülleborn/Engel I:326). Note the prepositionality of the human vis-à-vis the natural world (see fn 5 above). Interestingly, given the aqueous terms in which animal immanence tends to be conceived, Heidegger, in his explanation of the term "das Offene" also resorts to an 'oceanic' metaphor: "Was dieses meint, sagt uns am ehesten die Redewendung vom 'offenen Meer'. Dieses ist gewonnen, wenn alle Landgrenzen verschwunden sind. Das Offene ist das Fehlen und die Abwesenheit von Grenzen und Schranken, das Gegenstandslose, aber nicht als Mangel gedacht, sondern als das ursprüngliche Ganze des Wirklichen, in das die Kreatur unmittelbar ein- und d. h. freigelassen ist" (HGA 54: 234).

looks back or returns the gaze. Thus, when we look at animals, they, because they are facing the other way, *look at us*, and in their faces we see, darkly (*verdunkelt*), the "Spiegelung des Frein." But the experience of encountering, of being looked at by an animal, is in itself an intimation of the Open that is otherwise closed to us: "Oder daß ein Tier, | ein stummes, aufschaut, ruhig durch uns durch" (v. 32).[19] The gaze of the animal sees right through us and it knows, as it says in the first *Elegy*, "daß wir nicht sehr verläßlich zu Haus sind | in der gedeuteten Welt" (WA 2: 685).

By opening up the possibility of an alternative worldview, the animal's silent, penetrating gaze is fundamentally disquieting to the human, in that it challenges the hegemony of anthropocentrism, and in doing so troubles the human's sense of security in his "interpreted" world, which is the world as seen through the matrix of the λόγος. We humans cannot see the Open because we are facing 'the wrong way', as it were, away from the Open space of infinite fullness and continuity, and toward "Gestaltung," which is to say, the ordered and strictly demarcated outlines of a world we, as world-forming ("weltbildend")[20] humans, have created, by means of λόγος, which

[19] As Klaus Laermann observes, Rilke was the first German-language poet to pay more than cursory attention to the animal gaze (125). Indeed, animals occupy a central position in Rilke's poetics above all because they are radically Other—the animals in Rilke's texts never serve simply as ciphers for specific human characteristics. And it is especially the gaze of the animal (e.g. the Panther, or the Black Cat, of the *New Poems*) that holds the promise of a different view of the world that is not fractured and distorted by the tyranny of human language. In contrast to Hofmannsthal's sacrificial zoopoetics, which seemingly do grant the poetic self access to the 'immanent immensity', Rilke's hopes of glimpsing the Open are mostly dashed, rendering his a more essentially melancholic zoopoetics.

[20] The characterisation of the human as *weltbildend* is most familiar from Heidegger's three theses concerning the relationship between various categories of entities to the world: "1. der Stein (das Materielle) ist *weltlos*; 2. das Tier ist *weltarm*; 3. der Mensch ist *weltbildend*" (HGA 29/30 263; cf. Agamben *Open*, 49–62; Derrida *Of Spirit*, 47–57), but Rilke also used the term, e.g. in a letter to Clara dated 20 January 1907: "Wir stellen Bilder aus uns hinaus, wir nehmen jeden Anlaß wahr, weltbildend zu werden, wir errichten Ding um Ding um unser Inneres herum" (*Briefe*, 155). For Rilke the urge to erect

alienates us from our own death. Human existence is thus an inexorable being-towards-death, but for that very reason a form of being that can never encompass or comprehend its own finitude. Animal existence, as Rilke conceives of it, faces away from death: animals' deaths are always already 'behind them'. The animal, as ever, is "on the side of death"—"nah am Tod"—which allows it to look past death and out into the Open.

The primary faculty which sets the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον apart from the ζῷα ἄ-λόγοι is the ability to draw distinctions: "speech [λόγος] is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong" etc. (Aristotle 1253a). At the same time, this faculty allows man to differentiate himself from other animals and establish himself as an autonomous subject who can say "I," but it is this act of differentiation itself, and not some *a priori* distinction, which constitutes the difference it identifies (cf. Prade 90). For Rilke, this urge to divide the world up into discrete categories is the main reason why he fears human language and why all speech is ultimately "Mißverständnis." Words express everything too clearly; language is too eager to establish firm limits ("und hier ist Beginn und das Ende ist dort"), and we all make the mistake of drawing overly sharp distinctions—"aber Lebendige machen |

images in fact serves only to construct a barrier between us and the true essence of the world, whereas Heidegger conceives of *Welt-Bildung* as unambiguously positive and a hallmark of human exceptionalism. Heidegger performs an identical reappropriation and inversion of Rilke's terminology when he takes "the Open" to be synonymous with "disclosure" (ἀλήθεια), and then posits that in fact it is man alone who can see the Open, whereas to animals, because they are "poor in world," it must forever remain "closed"—in other words, the exact opposite of how Rilke intends the term.

alle den Fehler, dass sie zu stark unterscheiden" (WA 2: 688). It is in this context that we must view Rilke's decision not to indicate explicitly that his sixteenth *Sonnet to Orpheus* is addressed to a dog. It is a deliberate attempt to counteract the segregation and fragmentation inherent in the act of naming ("dieses heißt Hund"): "ich mochts nicht anmerken," he writes to Clara, "eben um ihn vollkommen ins Ganze hereinzunehmen. Jeder Hinweis hätte ihn doch wieder isoliert und ausgesondert" (*Briefe*, 835).

The excessive drawing of distinctions applies not only to those between human and animal, however, but also between life and death. It is an error, Rilke asserts, to divide the world and our existence in it into a "Diesseits" and a "Jenseits," and hence to view death as the opposite of life. "Wie der Mond," Rilke writes, employing a favourite analogy, "so hat gewiß das Leben eine uns dauernd abgewendete Seite, die *nicht* sein Gegenteil ist, sondern eine Ergänzung zur Vollkommenheit, zur Vollzähligkeit, zu der wirklichen heilen und vollen Sphäre und Kugel des *Seins*."[21] The Open represents a state of being, or an experience of the world, in which life and death are not conceived as opposites, but rather as complementary halves of one great unity of being. The angels, Rilke says, make no such distinctions and often do not know "ob sie unter | Lebenden gehn oder Toten" (WA 2: 688). The fact that the figure of Orpheus becomes so central to Rilke's later poetry is first and foremost due to the way his art allowed him to disregard the boundary between the living and the

[21] Letter to Countess Margot Sizzo-Noris-Crouy, 6 January 1923 (*Briefe*, 806–7 [original italics]). Compare Rilke's letter to Hulewicz, in which he describes death as "die uns abgekehrte, von uns unbeschienene *Seite des Lebens*" (*Briefe*, 896 [original italics]).

dead and journey to the Underworld and back. Orphic poetry promises to undo the epistemic violence wrought by language upon the world, healing the fissures of human historico-linguistic consciousness, and reintegrating it into the "ungeheuere heile Kreis-Lauf des Lebens und Todes," [22] in which "nichts ist gering und überflüssig" and "alles stimmt, gilt, nimmt teil und bildet eine Vollzähligkeit, in der nichts fehlt" (WA 11: 723, cf. *Briefe*, 184–85).

"Vollzähligkeit"—a term practically untranslatable into English, except perhaps through the unlovely neologism 'pleninumerariness'—constitutes a poetic principle for Rilke, and it is linked to the fullness and immanence of the Open and of animal life. In a late poem (1924), written in French, Rilke speaks of the "calme des animaux" and wonders what it is that animals know that allows them to sleep so soundly and "jamais en vain":

> Ils ignorent. . . . . Est-ce cela ? Ils ignorent
> cette science et demie dont nous savons un quart ;
> ils se remplissent de vie comme la calme amphore
> et leur interne loi comprend le hasard.
> (WA 4: 663–64).

We humans know only one quarter of the "knowledge-and-a-half" that we sense is out there, leaving us perpetually dissatisfied and uneasy, whereas animals, because they are entirely ignorant of such knowledge, are filled to the brim with life. Their internal law is not a law of halves and quarters; it is full and complete, without lack, *vollzählig*. The only way for a human to approximate such *Vollzähligkeit* would be to forget such partial and incomplete knowledge and learn to see the world like an ani-

[22] Letter to Gertrud Ouckama Knoop, 12 April 1923 (Fülleborn/Engel, I:290).

mal does. "Vollzähliges Sehen" is the condition of possibility for the emergence of 'sachliches Sagen'.[23] It is the type of seeing that simply registers, objectively and humbly, the outside world, without filtering anything out—e.g. death and other frightening or unsavoury elements—or adding anything, since both operations would destroy the holistic unity of the world and shatter it into disparate, irreconcilable fragments, which is precisely the experience of the world that this new artistic vision is designed to overcome. It is, in other words, the type of dog-like seeing that Rilke identifies with Cézanne, the kind of pleninumerary seeing that, by means of a lengthy physiological process of mastication and digestion, can transform the world into its perfect aesthetic equivalent, into a world "in der | alles noch einmal da war" (WA 2: 544).

III. Long Division

"J'ai vu dans l'œil animal," Rilke writes, "la vie paisible qui dure, | la calme impartial | de l'imperturbable nature." The animal inhabits a "champ d'abondance," grazing on "une présence | qui n'a pas goût d'ailleurs" (WA 4: 551)—an unmistakable parallel to the herd grazing peacefully in the opening passage of Nietzsche's second *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung,* "Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben" (1874):

> Betrachte die Heerde, die an dir vorüberweidet: sie weiss nicht was Gestern, was Heute ist, springt umher, frisst, ruht, verdaut, springt wieder, und so vom Morgen bis zur Nacht und von Tage zu Tage, kurz angebunden mit ihrer Lust und Unlust, nämlich an den Pflock des Augenblickes und deshalb weder schwermüthig noch überdrüssig. (KSA I: 248)

[23] On the principle of "Vollzähligkeit" see especially Annette Gerok-Reiter, who refers to it as "eine conditio sine qua non" of Rilke's aesthetics (498).

Animal existence is one of blissful ignorance and insouciance, characterised by radical unity, presence and truthfulness. The animal has no conception of or relationship to the passage of time, and thus lives only in the moment without bothering about the past or the future. "So lebt das Thier *unhistorisch*" (KSA I: 249), as opposed to man, who is weighed down by the oppressive burden of history, a fate which has befallen him on account of his inability to remember how to forget, having wilfully suppressed his natural animal forgetfulness in pursuit of his hypertrophied faculty of memory. Man is proud of his achievements, and likes to vaunt his human superiority over the lower animals, and yet he finds himself envying their carefree happiness. An imaginary dialogue unfolds, in which man asks the animal why it doesn't speak to him about its happiness, but even as the animal is about to say that it remains silent because it always forgets what it was about to say: "da vergass es aber auch schon diese Antwort und schwieg." Thus the animal's silence becomes a factor of its forgetfulness, and man is left wondering.

The animal, however, doesn't seem to wonder about anything: "es geht auf in der Gegenwart, wie eine Zahl, ohne dass ein wunderlicher Bruch übrig bleibt." The "wunderlicher Bruch" which remains when the present is 'divided by' man (to keep with Nietzsche's mathematical metaphor) is precisely that which constitutes his historicity. If, as I suggested in the introduction, the human is traditionally defined according to the formula "animal + x" then it is precisely this x which is left over when man is divided by the present. The animal, by contrast, represents an integer, evenly divisible by the moment—it is *vollzählig*, in other words. Man's existence as "ein nie zu vollendendes Imperfectum" is starkly at odds with the animal's all-encompassing

present tense. The animal sees each moment "wirklich sterben, in Nebel und Nacht zurücksinken und auf immer erlöschen," but for man the moment comes back, ghost-like, to haunt him and ruin the tranquillity of future *Augenblicke*, no matter how far or fast he runs—"mag er noch so weit, noch so schnell laufen, die Kette läuft mit." One is reminded of the terms of Faust's pact with Mephistopheles, that he might be granted infinite knowledge, but that if he should ever stop and say to the fleeting moment, "Verweile doch! du bist so schön! | Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen, | Dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn!" (vv. 1700–02). The chains of history are already around man's ankles, holding him back and impeding his progress. What is more, Faust's melancholy at the beginning of the play—having studied all the books in his extensive library, amassed all the knowledge in the world, and still none the wiser—is analogous to the state of inert historicity that Nietzsche is diagnosing here. In both cases, it is an encounter with an animal that will point to the way out of this impasse.

For Nietzsche, animal forgetting represents a positive force, which, when coupled with a physiological, 'digestive' model of mental consumption, offers an antidote to the ravages of mankind's historical consciousness and the perennially guilty conscience that plagues such excessively memorious creatures as humans. By practicing a bit of judicious amnesia, by learning to forget inessential and obtrusive details, we too can enjoy the same sort of "gutes Gewissen" that Rilke saw in Cézanne. Forgetting, Nietzsche writes in the second treatise of his *Genealogie der Moral* (1887), is by no means a purely passive or inert process, but rather

> ein aktives, im strengsten Sinne positives Hemmungsvermögen, dem es zuzuschreiben ist, dass was nur von uns erlebt, erfahren, in uns hineingenommen wird, uns im Zustande der Verdauung (man dürfte ihn 'Einverseelung' nennen) ebenso wenig in's Bewusstsein tritt, als der ganze tausendfältige Prozess, mit dem sich unsre leibliche Ernährung, die sogenannte 'Einverleibung' abspielt. (KSA V: 291)

This healthy attitude of forgetting allows man to move on from a spot that's been thoroughly denuded to another where the grass is still fresh, like the herd of animals grazing at the beginning of *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*, which "springt umher, frisst, ruht, verdaut, springt wieder." The mental digestive process extracts the nutrients from the intellectual material and discards the rest. The unhealthy insistence on historical awareness which causes man to code his existence as "ein ununterbrochenes Gewesensein" to the extent that he becomes "ein Ding, das davon lebt, sich selbst zu verneinen und zu verzehren, sich selbst zu widersprechen" (KSA I: 249) is linked to the constitution of man as the animal "das *versprechen darf*" (KSA V: 291). The operative word in both cases is 'sprechen': it is man's reliance on language which propels him into a temporal-historical mode of being, where a natural degree of rumination (*Wiederkäuen*) becomes positively harmful and the creature begins to eat itself (*sich selbst verzehren*). The animal, by contrast, can neither contradict itself nor make promises because both actions presuppose a conception of future and past actions and utterances: "es weiss sich nicht zu verstellen, verbirgt nichts und erscheint in jedem Momente ganz und gar als das was es ist, kann also gar nicht anders sein als ehrlich" (KSA I: 249). The animal's compulsive honesty is of a different order than man's because it does not carry with it the possibility of deceit. Hidden within the promise there is likewise always the implication that it may not be fulfilled.

Man's status as an animal that is entitled to make promises is inherently paradoxical, Nietzsche suggests, because the acquisition of the faculty of memory presupposed by the promise requires him to negate his natural animal forgetfulness. In placing this faculty of memory, and consequently the prerogative to make promises, within a genealogical framework, Nietzsche re-establishes a continuity between human and animal, where the human is merely another species of animal—"wir haben ihn unter die Thiere zurückgestellt" (KSA VI: 180)—and the evolution of human culture and society is simply a natural process. The human animal is an animal that has been bred (*herangezüchtet*) by nature in order to be allowed to make promises. This, Nietzsche suggests, is the paradoxical task that Nature has set itself with regard to the human, and is thus in fact the essential problem of the human as such: "das eigentliche Problem *vom* Menschen" (KSA V: 291). Culture is something that has developed and takes place within nature, not outside or in opposition to it. However strange and unnatural an animal the human may be, it is still an animal, albeit, as Nietzsche later phrased it: "das missrathenste Thier, das krankhafteste, das von seinen Instinkten am gefährlichste⟨n⟩ abgeirrte – freilich, mit alle dem, auch das interessanteste!" (KSA VI: 180).

In order to give one's word, with the added assurance that one will keep it, that one will be "as good as one's word," one must first have a word to give. Thus the definition of the human as "ein Thier, das versprechen darf" is predicated on the definition of the human as the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, as the animal that has "the word." Man's licence to make promises is granted to him by language. The legitimacy of the

promise depends on the legitimacy of the word, a legitimacy which it in turn continually asserts for itself by means of the promise. To give one's word is to avow that one will be "true" to it, an avowal which rests on the prior assurance that words can be either true or false. But as Nietzsche asserted in his treatise *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, telling the truth is really just a mode of lying "nach einer festen Convention" (KSA I: 881), because the truth itself is nothing but a collection of metaphors and anthropomorphisms that have been generally agreed upon. The promise, then, acts as an additional guarantee that a given utterance is "true" and will still be "true" tomorrow. The promise is something added to the word, guaranteeing its truth—in much the same way as the prefix *ver-* ("die vielleicht abgründigste Vorsilbe der deutschen Sprache"[24]) is added to the speech act to transform it from a *sprechen* to a *versprechen*. Hence the promise is inherently excessive, and who-

[24] "'Die ursprüngliche indogermanische Bedeutung der Partikel "fort, hinweg, ab"' (Grimm) hat sich in der Entwicklung der deutschen Sprache nach zwei entgegengesetzten Richtungen mannigfach ausdifferenziert. Einerseits markiert ver 'ein Hinweggehen, Hinwegschaffen vom bisherigen Wege': verlaufen, verführen, verbiegen, verdrängen, verbannen. Auf dieser Linie hat sich auch die abstrakte Bedeutung von ver als Negation, als Verkehrung des einfachen Verbs ins Gegenteil entwickelt: versagen, verbieten, verbitten. 'In zweiter Linie hat ver die Bedeutung "fort, bis zum Ende", bezeichnet also ein Vorwärtsschreiten, Vorwärtsbringen der im einfachen Zeitworte ausgesprochenen Tätigkeit auf dem eingeschlagenen Wege bis zur Vollendung': verbrauchen, verbrennen, verbleiben, vertilgen. Statt der Negation liegt hier eine 'Verstärkung' und 'Steigerung' des Grundbegriffs vor. In einer Subklasse dieser Linie geht die Bedeutung des Zu-Ende-Führens noch über dieses Ende hinaus und kippt dadurch in ein 'zu viel, zu sehr' um: verschlafen, versalzen." (Menninghaus *Lob des Unsinns*, 172). For Menninghaus, this etymological rumination leads to a consideration of the word "Verstehen," whose combination of the prefix *ver-* and the root verb *stehen* is all but impossible to understand. The abyssal nature of *ver-* might equally well have been illustrated by means of the word "versprechen," which, at least once its reflexive form is taken into consideration, unites the first and second senses of *ver-*: on the one hand the gesture toward the future and completion—the *pro-* in the *promise*, as something that has been put forward, into the future, to be "kept" at a later date—and on the other the divergence or perversion of the speech act implied by the reflexive "sich versprechen"—to misspeak, to say the wrong thing, something other than what you meant to say, but which, as in the classic "Freudian slip," may in fact be closer to the truth than the intended meaning.

ever promises always promises too much, more than he can keep. One might say that there is always something 'left over'—"ein wunderlicher Bruch," in other words, which generates the sense of history by virtue of exceeding the present moment and projecting itself into the future, toward a time in which this promise will be remembered. "Without this essential excess," writes Derrida,

> [the promise] would return to a description or knowledge of the future. Its act would have a constative structure and not a performative one. But this "too much" of the promise does not belong to a (promised) content of a promise which I would be incapable of keeping. It is within the very structure of the *act* of promising that this excess comes to inscribe a kind of irremediable disturbance or perversion. (Derrida *Mémoires*, 93–94)

The promise is that which language adds *to itself*, in a constitutive, self-legitimising gesture, which, like any supplement, undermines the integrity of that to which it is added, because without the supplemental promise language could not "speak" at all. Which means "that the essence of speech is the promise, that there is no speaking that does not promise" (97). The promise, and specifically the permission or the licence to make promises, is first and foremost something language promises itself, but this recursive supplement inflicts an error, an excess on the act of speaking, so that *sprechen* becomes not only *versprechen*, but quite literally *sich versprechen*—an act of misspeaking, an unintentional yet unavoidable corruption of the utterance. Or, in Paul de Man's concise formulation: "*Die Sprache verspricht (sich)*; to the extent that [it] is necessarily misleading, language just as necessarily conveys the promise of its own truth" (de Man 277).

The structure of the promise, its function as guarantee of future consistency and reliability, of the permanence of truth, requires a degree of predictability that

Nietzsche finds stifling. The human, in being bred to make promises, must be made "berechenbar, regelmässig, nothwendig" (KSA V: 292), must be anchored to a stable and self-identical "I" that will stand surety for the truth of its own word. If the crisis of language is linked to a consciousness of the irredeemable alterity of the "I" it is because the promise of truth and permanence that it is meant to guarantee has been revealed as untenable. Man, as the animal that has "the word" and can use it to say "I," puts himself at stake in every linguistic utterance, because only by speaking, by giving the word that is his alone to keep, can he guarantee that he is who he says he is, and that what he says is true.[25] But if "I" is another, if "I" is not who "I" says "I" is, then how can "I" act as a guarantor of the truth and validity of whatever "I" says? If all language is nothing but a collection of untruths, how can the would-be trustworthy, predictable individual, whose word is his bond, differentiate himself from the "Lügner, der sein Wort bricht, im Augenblick schon, wo er es im Munde hat" (KSA V: 294)? Better to place the utterance in the mouth of an animal—a dog, say—that cannot break its word because it doesn't have a word to break, "weiss sich nicht zu verstellen, verbirgt nichts und erscheint in jedem Momente ganz und gar als das was es ist." Silence comes to betoken honesty; speech, deception and falseness.

[25] Cf. Giorgio Agamben's *Sacrament of Language*, in which he reads the oath as "call[ing] into question the very nature of man as a speaking animal and a political animal" (11). "The first promise," he writes, "the first—and, so to speak, transcendental—*sacratio* is produced by means of this division, in which man, opposing his language to his actions, can put himself at stake in language, can promise himself to the *logos*. ¶ Something like a human language was in fact only able to be produced in the moment in which the living being, who found itself co-originarily exposed to the possibility of both truth and lie, committed itself to respond with its life for its words, to testify in the first person for them" (69).

Broken Promises

Rilke doesn't often mention promises, but when he does, they are almost invariably impossible to keep. "Hatte man nicht hundertmal versprechen müssen, nicht zu sterben?" (WA XI: 942), asks Malte Laurids Brigge at the end of his *Aufzeichnungen*, during his retelling of the parable of the prodigal son. In Malte's reading, the parable is really about someone who refused to be loved, because being loved inevitably involves making promises of that sort: infinite, unreasonable. Only a god can make such promises. Like the statues of the Roman gods in the fifth poem of Rilke's cycle "Die Parke" (1907),

> die noch manchmal dann und wann
>
> Das gewähren, was sie einst gewährten
> [...]
> wenn sie ganz von ersten Schatten beben
> und Versprechen um Versprechen geben,
> alle unbegrenzt und unbestimmt.
> (WA 2: 606)

At least one commentator has taken this last line to mean that these promises are not to be taken too seriously (Stewart 245), and that may indeed be true, given that these are "niemals ganzgeglaubte Götter," but for Rilke all promises are constitutively unlimited and indeterminate.

What is it that these gods used to grant or bestow, and occasionally still do? Clearly it is these promises themselves that the gods "gewähren"—a word that shares a root with "Wahrheit," and hence means to guarantee or vouchsafe the truth of something. By making these vague and limitless promises, then, the gods not only guarantee that they will be "true" to the words: their words are necessarily true, and

thus act as a guarantee of language's ability to speak the truth at all, and hence of words' capacity to refer to things in the world. The names of the gods testified to the coincidence of words and things, language and truth—but now these gods' power has dwindled, their credibility is tarnished, and even their names are now regarded as nothing but "Elegante | Pseudonyme, unter denen man | sich verbarg" (WA 2: 606). Like the truths denounced by Nietzsche as "eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen" that have been "poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt" (KSA I: 880), these gods are just anthropomorphic projections, disguises we humans used to hide behind, in order to imbue our words and actions with an aura of transcendental legitimacy. But now that we have been 'unmasked' and the real identity behind these elegant pseudonyms has been revealed, all bets are off, and any promises made in their name are null and void.

Death marks the horizon of the promise for Rilke, and in order to be valid, a promise must extend beyond death. Every promise is essentially an act of defiance in the face of death. Thus, just as Alcestis, in Rilke's version of the myth, is being led off to the underworld, she turns and smiles at her husband Admetus, in whose stead she has consented to die:

> Aber einmal sah
> er noch des Mädchens Antlitz, das sich wandte
> mit einem Lächeln, hell wie eine Hoffnung,
> die beinah ein Versprechen war: erwachsen
> zurückzukommen aus dem tiefen Tode
> zu ihm, dem Lebenden –
>
> Da schlug er jäh
> die Hände vors Gesicht, wie er so kniete,
> um nichts zu sehen mehr nach diesem Lächeln. (WA 2: 549)

In order to keep the promise to the other, in order *to be allowed* to make promises at all, one would need to be able to transcend death. One would need to be Orpheus, in other words, who, unlike Admetus, was able to descend into the Underworld to retrieve his beloved Eurydice.[26] But even Orpheus failed to lead Eurydice out of the world of the dead and back into the world of the living, because he was too impatient. As he walks along the path "der ins Leben aufstieg," ahead of Eurydice and Hermes, his gaze runs ahead "wie ein Hund" and turns around, runs back to him and then ahead again to stand "wartend an der nächsten Wendung" (WA 2: 543). It is difficult to maintain the non-human, animal-like gaze *away* from death. Only the dead are completely "ohne Ungeduld" but this absolute patience, this total oblivion and inability to draw distinctions—"*Wer*?" Eurydice asks, having no memory of Orpheus that would allow her to recognise him—also renders all communication impossible. Rilke's Orphic poetry is not so much the poetry *of* the Open, as inhabited by the angels, as it is the poetry of someone who has *seen* the Open, who has been to the other side, and has lived to tell the tale.

The Greek word for promise is ἐπαγγελία (*epangelía*), from ἐπί, "on," or "fitting" + ἀγγέλλειν, "to announce" (again it is something that is added to the speech act, guaranteeing its validity). To make a promise is to make a declaration that is fitting or apt, i.e. which is legitimate. And this legitimacy, as we have seen, can only come from God. Appropriately, then, the figure best suited to deliver such a legitimate ἐπαγγελία is the messenger of God or the gods: ὁ ἄγγελος (*ho ángelos*), the an-

[26] In Euripides' play *Alcestis*, Hercules descends to the Underworld and brings Admetus' wife back from the dead. In Rilke's version, however, there is no hope of such death-defying heroics.

gel. The angels in Rilke's poetic universe, those terrifying figures at whom his songs and anguished cries are directed, are the ambassadors of a space in which promises are still fulfilled and where truth is still possible. But this is no longer the comforting, narcissistic truth of metaphysical anthropocentrism; it is the profoundly unsettling truth of radical "Diesseitigkeit," of the total indifference and "Teilnahmslosigkeit" of the natural world.

IV. The Other Side

Rilke's attitude toward nature in general was one of stark alienation. In his essay on the artistic community at Worpswede from 1902, he emphatically asserts that nature "weiß nichts von uns" and that one feels less helplessly alone with a dead body than one does with a living tree, for

> so geheimnisvoll der Tod sein mag, geheimnisvoller noch ist ein Leben, das nicht unser Leben ist, das nicht an uns teilnimmt und, gleichsam ohne uns zu sehen, seine Feste feiert, denen wir mit einer gewissen Verlegenheit, wie zufällig kommende Gäste, die eine andere Sprache sprechen, zusehen. (WA 9: 11)

The same essay may provide a key to understanding Rilke's statement in the first Duino Elegy that "Das Schöne ist nichts | als des Schrecklichen Anfang," for in it he suggests that mankind built cities in order not to have to be confronted with nature and her "erhabene Gleichgültigkeit (welche wir Schönheit nennen)" and instead to comfort itself with the "scheinbaren Natur des Häusermeeres," which "wie mit großen Spiegeln" reflects mankind's ingenuity back on itself. Thus the terror heralded by beauty would be an awareness of the sublime indifference of nature.

Rilke writes that we humans only began to understand nature once we no longer understood it: "man begann die Natur erst zu begreifen, als man sie nicht-mehr begriff; als man fühlte, daß sie das Andere war, das Teilnahmslose, das keine Sinne hat uns aufzunehmen, da war man erst aus ihr herausgetreten, einsam, aus einer einsamen Welt" (WA 10: 521). This is what Rilke means when he says that in his *Stundenbuch* phase he had not yet taken up a position *in front of* nature ("ich saß noch nicht *vor* ihr"): he was still too much *in* nature to understand how indifferent and alien it was. Once man had extracted himself from his view of nature, he began to paint "Bilder von Landschaften, in denen nichts geschieht. Leere Meere hat man gemalt, weiße Häuser in Regentagen, Wege, auf denen keiner geht, und unsäglich einsame Wasser."[27] And gradually, Rilke continues, as man began to understand this a-human language, he began to appreciate "die große Ruhe der Dinge," (what Rilke will later call the "calme des animaux"); "man empfand, wie ihr Dasein in Gesetzen verging, ohne Erwartung und *ohne Ungeduld*" (522, emphasis added). And when man, having successfully extracted himself from the landscape, began tentatively to reintroduce human figures into that natural landscape, it was as one thing among

[27] The fact that Rilke cannot resist this hypallage ("einsame Wasser") goes to show that he had, at this point at least, not succeeded in expelling every trace of anthropomorphism and the "pathetic fallacy" from his impassive, impersonal view of the landscape and the natural world. Ultimately, of course, both of these these conceptions of nature are fundamentally human projections, corresponding to what Nietzsche ironically referred to as "die gute und die böse Natur": "Erst haben die Menschen sich in die Natur hineingedichtet: sie sahen überall sich und Ihresgleichen, nämlich ihre böse und launenhafte Gesinnung, gleichsam versteckt unter Wolken, Gewittern, Raubthieren, Bäumen und Kräutern: damals erfanden sie die 'böse Natur'. Dann kam einmal eine Zeit, da sie sich wieder aus der Natur hinausdichteten, die Zeit Rousseau's: man war einander so satt, dass man durchaus einen Weltwinkel haben wollte, wo der Mensch nicht hinkommt mit seiner Qual: man erfand die 'gute Natur'" (KSA III: 29–30). Crucially, both ideas of nature—the "bad" anthropomorphic version, and the "good" disanthropic version, uncontaminated by human presence—are nothing but constructs based on particular human desires and needs. (On the concept of disanthropy, see Garrard.)

many. Only by subtracting the human from the natural equation can the poet hope to catch a glimpse of the Open, in which there is a perfect equivalence between words and things.

In a short prose text, entitled *Erlebnis*, written in 1913, Rilke describes a quasi-mystical experience—not unlike one of Lord Chandos's 'good moments'—which supposedly took place a year previously on the grounds of Castle Duino on the Adriatic coast, and has thus generally been read in relation to the first two *Duino Elegies*, which were written at that time. The unnamed protagonist of *Erlebnis* has stopped to lean on a bifurcated tree, and suddenly feels "angenehm unterstützt," "reichlich eingeruht," and "völlig eingelassen in die Natur" (WA 11: 1037)—evidently this is an experience quite unlike the feeling of unsettling alienation Rilke had associated with the trees of *Worpswede* a decade earlier. He begins to sense barely perceptible vibrations coming from deep inside the tree, which resonate inside his own body. He begins to conceive of these vibrations as a message of some sort, but he is unable to decipher its meaning. Nevertheless, he quickly finds what he deems to be an apt description of this new state: "er sei auf die andere Seite der Natur geraten" (1038). Like the dark side of the moon, the "unbeschienene Seite des Lebens," this other side of nature is characterised by radical presence, in which nothing is absent. Even the dead may still walk here, as there are no such distinctions any longer. In short, this "Erlebnis" is an experience of the Open.

> Eine Vinca, die in seiner Nähe stand und deren blauem Blick er wohl auch sonst zuweilen begegnet war, berührte ihn jetzt aus geistigerem Abstand, aber mit so unerschöpflicher Bedeutung, als ob nun nichts mehr zu verbergen sei. Überhaupt konnte er merken, wie sich alle Gegenstände ihm

> entfernter und zugleich irgendwie wahrer gaben, es mochte dies an seinem Blick liegen, der nicht mehr vorwärts gerichtet war und sich dort, im Offenen, verdünnte; er sah wie über die Schulter zu den Dingen zurück, und ihrem für ihn abgeschlossenen Dasein kam ein kühner süßer Beigeschmack hinzu, als wäre alles mit einer Spur von der Blüte des Abschieds würzig gemacht. (1039)

In the second part of the text, he tries to think back to earlier moments in his life that in retrospect seem like they may have presaged this mystical experience. It seems to him that there might have been such moments stretching back to his earliest childhood, and indeed the whole experience has the character of a dream or a memory, specifically a memory of a time before his gaze, like that of all children, was turned around, away from the Open, and toward human "Gestaltung," as described in the eighth Elegy. Thus, what he describes as an experience of looking "back" at things "over his shoulder" should be read in both spatial and temporal terms: it is a "looking back" to a pre-"Gestaltung" apperception of the world, at the same time, this attitude of retrospection temporarily undoes the original "Wendung" carried out on "das frühe Kind," re-orienting his gaze and allowing it to dissolve into the Open, like an animal's, as it once did.

"Vogelruf" and "Weltinnenraum"

When thinking back to precursors to this experience, the man remembers a moment in Capri when "ein Vogelruf draußen und in seinem Innern übereinstimmend da war, indem er sich gewissermaßen an der Grenze des Körpers nicht brach, beides zu einem ununterbrochenen Raum zusammennahm, in welchem, geheimnisvoll geschützt, nur eine einzige Stelle reinsten, tiefsten Bewußtseins blieb" (1040). This

state of total coherence, of perfect equivalence between inside and outside, is what Rilke refers to as "Weltinnenraum," and it is almost invariably heralded by a bird's cry, or else by the experience of a bird flying silently "through" us—"Durch alle Wesen reicht der eine Raum: | Weltinnenraum. Die Vögel fliegen still | durch uns hindurch" (WA 3: 93)—just as the sound of the bird's cry does not "break" when it encounters the boundary of the man's body. The state of perfect equivalence that obtains in the Open renders all such boundaries ineffectual and meaningless.

At the same time, the "Vogelruf" itself defies reduction to any unequivocal meaning. Nor is it a metaphor or a symbol in the traditional sense. As Ulrich Baer observes, "bei jedem 'Vogelruf' in Rilkes Werk geht es darum, daß ein Ereignis den normalen Lauf der Dinge stoppt und damit das Vorhandensein einer anderen und letztlich *höheren* Ebene bestätigt, auf der die Dinge eine weitere Bedeutung erlangen." It functions exclusively as an interruption, a break in the rhetorical logic of the text: "Der 'Vogelruf' markiert an jeder dieser Stellen also den Punkt, wo er nicht mehr einfach als Metapher dient, sondern die Störung und Unterbrechung solcher rhetorischer Konventionen und der vom Gedicht entworfenen Programme aufzeigt" (Baer 265–66). It is, in other words, what Akira Lippit refers to as an "animetaphor," the intrusion of "an other expression" into language, an animal presence that both is and is not part of the discourse that surrounds it, at once a metaphor and an antimetaphor. Baer seems to confirm this when he writes, "Rilkes 'Vogelruf' steht für ein Ereignis, das nicht nur alles durchdringt, sondern in sich vollkommen ist. [...] Als rhetorische Figur ist die Metapher des 'Vogelrufs' sowohl Behältnis wie auch Inhalt" (267–68).

The figure of the "Vogelruf" resounds throughout Rilke's poetry, from the early poem "Bangnis" (1900) to a very late fragment, written shortly before his death in 1926, which begins: "Die Vogelrufe fangen an zu rühmen." The birds' cries break the silence surrounding the poet and his fellow humans, but the meaning of their cries is impossible to make out: "Was rufen sie? Ein wenig Eigensinn, || ein wenig Wehmut und sehr viel Versprechen, | das an der halbverschlossenen Zukunft feilt" (WA 3: 508). The *Vogelruf* is "eigensinnig," in the sense that its meaning is entirely "eigen," (self-contained, autological). Like the animal, which, for Nietzsche, conceals nothing and 'is what it is,' the *Vogelruf* is both the medium and the message; "es bleibt kein Rest." And for that very reason it holds "sehr viel Versprechen"—the promise of another, non-human language, the angelic language of presence and fullness and truth.

Blood Work

The phrase "Die Vogelrufe fangen an zu rühmen," unites three central poetic principles of Rilke's late work: First, *Rühmen*, which forms the crux of Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, a self-contained and autotelic song of praise, which, when proclaimed by the poet (who is "einer der bleibenden Boten"; an abiding messenger, an ἄγγελος), does not admit of the lie and is thus intrinsically true and valid. Second, the *Vogelruf*, which, as we saw, is likewise whole, unbroken, and self-contained; the sudden irruption of "an other expression" in the midst of the prevailing silence. In his "Improvisationen aus dem Capreser Winter" (1906/07), Rilke voices his desire to trade all of

human language for this monotonous all-purpose birdcall, which is so much more effective at opening the world than words are:

> und ich wollte, mir wüchse, wie einem Tier,
> eine Stimme, ein einziger Schrei
> für alles –. Denn was soll mir die Zahl
> der Worte, die kommen und fliehn,
> wenn ein Vogellaut, vieltausendmal,
> geschrien und wieder geschrien,
> ein winziges Herz so weit macht und eins
> mit dem Herzen der Luft, mit dem Herzen des Hains
> und so hell und so hörbar für Ihn… (WA 3: 13)

The third poetic principle is the notion of beginning (*anfangen*). From the Paris experience onwards, Rilke's poetic project is conceived in terms of starting again, with a clean slate ("ohne frühere Erinnerungen"), which is why he must re-learn how to see. "Habe ich es schon gesagt?" Malte asks (in fact he has already said, but since he is a beginner in all things, he cannot remember what has been said and what hasn't): "Ich lerne sehen. Ja, ich fange an" (WA 11: 711); "Ich glaube ich müßte anfangen, etwas zu arbeiten, jetzt da ich sehen lerne" (723); "Ich habe es augenblicklich etwas schwer, weil alles zu neu ist. Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen" (775).

As early as 1898, Rilke had announced such a poetics of new beginnings, in §2 of his *Notizen zur Melodie der Dinge*: "Ich kann mir kein seligeres Wissen denken, | als dieses Eine: | daß man ein Beginner werden muß. | Einer der das erste Wort schreibt hinter einen | Jahrhundertelangen | Gedankenstrich" (WA 10: 412). And this first word, emerging at a rare hour, after a century of silence, will not be the product of the artist's will or intention, or of his memory and experience, at least not directly:

for the sake of a single verse, writes Malte in the fourteenth fragment of his *Aufzeichungen*, one has to have seen many cities, people, and things, "man muß die Tiere kennen, man muß fühlen, wie die Vögel fliegen, und die Gebärde wissen, mit welcher die kleinen Blumen sich auftun am Morgen" (WA 11: 724). But it is not enough merely to have had such experiences, one also has to be able to forget them and wait patiently—"ohne Ungeduld"—until they return:

> Denn die Erinnerungen selbst *sind* es noch nicht. Erst wenn sie Blut werden in uns, Blick und Gebärde, namenlos und nicht mehr zu unterscheiden von uns selbst, erst dann kann es geschehen, daß in einer sehr seltenen Stunde das erste Wort eines Verses aufsteht in ihrer Mitte und aus ihnen ausgeht. (724–25)

Blood is a key concept for Rilke's poetics—which, like Hofmannsthal's, is fundamentally a form of 'haematopoetics', but, unlike the latter's, is not grounded in a sacrificial impulse. Indeed, Rilke is not interested in ecstasy and excess and flowing over so much as in perfect equilibrium, harmony and plenitude. True poetry is not released through the violent spilling of blood, but rather in the quiet, patient internalisation of experience, which, by means of a lengthy physiological process, is completely assimilated into the poet's body until it becomes an inseparable part of him. The invisible circulation of blood inside the poet's body then becomes linked, via the principle of *Weltinnenraum*, to "das Blut des größesten Kreislaufs"[28] which flows through the great unity of existence.

Rilke's name for this process is "heart-work," a task to be undertaken once the "work of looking" has been done and the poet has captured enough images. The

[28] Letter to Rilke's Polish translator, Witold Hulewicz, postmarked 13 November 1925 (*Briefe*, 896).

transition from these two forms of work is depicted in Rilke's poem "Wendung," written in Paris in the summer of 1914, which begins: "Lange errang ers im Anschaun." But now mere looking is no longer sufficient,

> Denn des Anschauns, siehe, ist eine Grenze.
> Und die geschautere Welt
> will in der Liebe gedeihn.
>
> Werk des Gesichts ist getan,
> tue nun Herz-Werk
> an den Bildern in dir, jenen gefangenen (WA 3: 84).

One of the triggers for this about-face is the experience of the natural world returning the gaze:

> Tiere traten getrost
> in den offenen Blick, weidende,
> und die gefangenen Löwen
> starrten hinein wie in unbegreifliche Freiheit;
> Vögel durchflogen ihn grad,
> den gemütigen; Blumen
> wiederschauten in ihn
> groß wie in Kinder" (WA 3: 82).

We will notice that these are the same things—animals, birds, flowers—the knowledge of which had, for Malte, been indispensible for the production of poetry. The birds fly straight through him, establishing a link to the *Weltinnenraum*, while the flowers stare back at him, like the blue periwinkle of *Erlebnis I*.

The caged lions recall the prose poem "Der Löwenkäfig" (WA 11: 1135–36), thematically linked to "Der Panther" and probably written around the same time (late 1902 or early 1903) and subsequently revised in the summer of 1907 (Kayser). The text describes two lions, a male and a female: while he lies, ill and indolent, on the

floor of the cage, repeatedly tracing a figure of indescribable contempt "mit dem weichen Pinsel seines Schwanzes," she paces restlessly back and forth "am Rand der Wälle, wo nichts mehr ist," dimly aware of a longing for home, the shattered memory of which lies "im Dunkel auf dem Grund ihres Blutes," like the shards of a broken mirror at the bottom of the sea.

In a third zoo text, "Die Aschanti," from the *Buch der Bilder* (1906), also written in 1902 or early 1903, the poet turns his gaze away from the African tribespeople on display at the *Jardin d'Acclimatation*, preferring the animals, "die in Gittern auf und niedergehn," because unlike the Ashanti, who actively seek out and return the European spectators' gaze, establishing a curious reciprocity with the vanity of the "hellen Menschen," the animals in their cages are "so viel treuer": They do not participate in this spectacle and are "mit ihrem großen Blut allein" (WA 1: 395; cf. Baer 15–25)—where alone should also be read in its etymological sense of all-one, i.e. singular, unitary, not contaminated or split through the acknowledged presence of another.

Let us pause here to recall John Berger's assertion that "no animal confirms man, either positively or negatively" (Berger 5). Rilke too prefers his animals to be pure indecipherable markers of otherness, because they hold the promise of a world without difference and fragmentation. Rilke's life and work is in many respects characterised by the studied avoidance of the gaze of the other. This is the other side of not recognising yourself in the mirror; the radical othering of the self and the total abdication of subjectivity in fact functions as a line of defence against the demands of the Other. Rilke is profoundly troubled by the implications of reciprocity, like the

prodigal son at the end of Malte's *Aufzeichnungen*, who refuses to be loved, because being loved means being projected into a state of dependency. "Geliebtwerden ist vergehen" (WA 11: 937): a state of perpetual dying, vanishing, perishing, and moreover one in which you are constantly forced to promise not to die.

V. More Broken Promises

The fact that Rilke prefers animals to humans rests primarily on their silence and on their "Teilnahmslosigkeit"—their sublime indifference to human concerns. One sees this above all in his attitude towards cats (both panthers and lions as well as domestic cats), which are so wholly other that Rilke wonders if they even exist: "J'avoue que, pour moi, leur existence ne fut jamais qu'une hypothèse passablement risquée" (WA 11: 1099). In order for an animal to be part of our world, he writes in his preface to Balthusz's *Mitsou*, "il faut qu'elles y entrent un peu" (1099). Cats don't do this: "Les chats sont des chats, tout court, et leur monde est le monde des chats d'un bout à l'autre." They have never been man's contemporaries, and it is doubtful to Rilke that any cat has ever deigned to allow man's "futile image" to register on their retina. They simply do not see us, anymore than we can see them—"aber da, an diesem schwarzen Felle | wird dein stärkstes Schauen aufgelöst" (WA 2: 595)—and if anything they find our existence equally implausible as Rilke does theirs. In the end, he concludes, there are no cats: "Il n'y a pas de chats" (WA 11: 1103).

With dogs it is a completely different story, however: their "rapprochement confidentiel et admiratif" is such that they appear at times to have abandoned their most ancient canine traditions and instead venerate our questionable habits and

"même nos erreurs." This, Rilke writes, is what makes them tragic and sublime. "Leur décision de nous admettre les force d'habiter, pour ainsi dire, aux confins de leur nature qu'ils dépassent constamment de leur regard humanisé et de leur museau nostalgique" (WA II: 1099). Dogs are liminal animals, caught between the human and the canine world, "ni homme ni animal, métis touchant et pitoyable" (Betz 178). They are the result of "une sorte de pacte entre l'homme et l'animal" (Betz 177), and Rilke is only too painfully aware of the obligations associated with that pact: "es [fällt] mir Hunden gegenüber ganz besonders schwer [...], mich nicht aufzuopfern," he writes from Duino to Ilse Sadée on 8 February, 1912: "sie gehen mir ganz und gar nah, diese auf uns völlig verlassenen Wesen, denen wir zu einer Seele heraufgeholfen haben, für die kein Himmel da ist" (*Briefe*, 331). Almost a decade later, in December of 1921, when Rilke was staying at Muzot, some friends offered to give him a dog to keep him company, but he refused, not wanting to commit to the kind of responsibility such companionship would inevitably require of him. As he told Lou Andreas-Salomé, "alles Lebendige, das *Anspruch* macht, stößt in mir auf ein unendliches Ihm-recht-geben,[29] aus dessen Consequenzen ich mich dann schmerzlich wieder

[29] In the winter of 1910–11, following the publication of the *Aufzeichnungen*, Rilke underwent something of a personal crisis, during which time he travelled to North Africa. In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, he describes how, on this journey, he was bitten by a dog, for the first time in his life (in which, he notes, "das Verhalten der Hunde nicht ohne Bezug war"): "da gab ich ihm recht, er drückte nur auf seine Art aus, daß ich völlig im Unrecht sei, mit Allem" (16.2.1912; *Briefwechsel*, 269). For more on Rilke's trip along the Nile and its relation to the zoo poems in the *Neue Gedichte*, see Lisa Gates's "Rilke and Orientalism." Gates's approach is notable in that, *contra* the dominant symbolic or allegorical readings of these poems, she "insist[s] on viewing the animal depicted not merely as a Kunstding or symbol, but originally as a living animal" (72n28). Rilke's zoo animals, she argues, are not representations of the animals themselves, but rather inescapably bound up in orientalist fantasies, where the animals are doubly trapped behind the bars of their cages and the orientalist discourse that surrounds them. It is surprising, then, that at the end of her essay, Gates nevertheless interprets

zurückziehen muß, wenn ich gewahre, daß sie mich völlig aufbrauchen" (*Briefwechsel*, 438). Cats make no such *Ansprüche*, and nor do the lions and panthers at the zoo, whose gaze stops at the bars of their cages and who are all alone in their "großem Blute."

To Malte Laurids Brigge, dogs are essentially synonymous with his memories of a longed-for, inviolate past. Their "museau nostalgique" points forever back to a time before fragmentation and alienation. "Was für ein Leben ist das eigentlich: ohne Haus, ohne ererbte Dinge, ohne Hunde. Hätte man doch wenigstens seine Erinnerungen. Aber wer hat die?" (WA 11: 721); "Ich würde so gerne unter den Bedeutungen bleiben, die mir lieb geworden sind, und wenn schon etwas sich verändern muß, so möchte ich doch wenigstens unter den Hunden leben dürfen, die eine verwandte Welt haben und dieselben Dinge" (756). Even in Paris, there are enclaves of peaceful human-canine co-existence, such as the antiquarian bookshops he passes now and then, whose proprietors sit all day and read, not worrying about money or success or the passage of time, with a dog sitting patiently by their side. "Ach, wenn das genügte," Malte writes: "ich wünschte manchmal, mir so ein volles Schaufenster zu kaufen und mich mit einem Hund dahinterzusetzen für zwanzig Jahre" (747; cf. *Briefe* 171–72). This is a form of reciprocity that Rilke fantasises about, but from which he is ultimately forced to shy away because it would mean entering into a relationship of dependency and trust which he feels incapable of living up to.

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the dog biting Rilke's hand symbolically, as "a sore reminder of the other's anger in the face of [Rilke's] blindness," and as an "attempt to force the Occident to open its eyes to the real Orient" (77).

In a diary entry from December of 1900, Rilke writes about an evening spent at Lou Andreas-Salomé's in Berlin with the author Gerhart Hauptmann and the Worpswede artist Heinrich Vogeler, where the conversation had turned to animals and our responsibilities toward them.

> Man sprach vom Tode der Tiere, vom Kranksein irgend eines kleinen hilflosen Kaninchens oder Vögelchens, dem man nicht zu helfen weiß. Ich sagte, ich fände es immer ungerecht, ein Tier an sich zu gewöhnen, es gleichsam zu Verkehr und Freundschaft zu überreden. Es faßt allmählich Vertrauen, und sobald ihm nur irgend etwas Kleines fehlt, müssen wir diesem Vertrauen schon wehe tun, da wir nicht imstande sind, den Grund seines Leidens oder seiner Wünsche Sinn zu verstehen. Was können wir ihm geben? Wir können es an uns heranziehen, es mit unseren Gewohnheiten verwöhnen, d. h. spielen mit ihm. Was an ihm Ernstes geschieht, ist unserer Hilfe und Teilnahme entzogen, – wer hat noch je das Schicksal seines Lieblingstieres wirklich wie ein Freund und Bruder zu teilen gewußt? Wir laden eine Schuld auf uns, eine Menge uneingelöster Versprechen und ein fortwährendes Versagen: das ist unser Anteil an diesem Verkehr. Und beim Menschen: da tragen beide gleichmäßig an dieser Schuld, und das macht ihre Beziehungen vielleicht ernster und tiefer, als ein vollkommenes einander Erfassen es zu tun vermöchte." (*Tagebücher* 343–42)

Rilke would include these reflections in his short story *Der Totengräber* (1901), in which the titular gravedigger comforts a young girl, who is mourning the death of her pet rabbit: "Man soll kein Tier an sich gewöhnen, Gita, das ist wahr. Man lädt eine Schuld auf sich damit, man verspricht und man kann nicht halten" (SW 8: 698). Similarly, in a scene based on the death of Lou Andreas-Salomé's beloved dog Lotte in the summer of 1899, Malte recalls the traumatic death of his own dog, "der mich ein- für allemal beschuldigte." In its final moments, the dog had looked at Malte reproachfully: "Er war überzeugt, ich hätte es hindern können. Nun zeigte es

sich, daß er mich immer überschätzt hatte. Und es war keine Zeit mehr, ihn aufzuklären. Er sah mich befremdet und einsam an, bis es zu Ende war. (WA 11: 859–60)

Despite the intolerable sadness of these relationships, the guilt and the broken promises they inevitably entail, dogs exert an irresistible pull on Rilke because by virtue of protruding from their own world into ours, "nicht ausgestoßen und nicht eingereiht," they come closest to bridging the gap between our 'gedeutete Welt' and the Open. This is also why they can serve as models for artistic production: Cézanne's gaze is "like a dog's," not "like a cat's" or "like a panther's" because those feline gazes are so wholly other that we could not hope to comprehend them. Their worlds are hermetically sealed to us, and there is no point of contact or overlap. Dogs, by contrast, come to us, offer us their "Gesicht,"[30] inviting us to look through their eyes, if only so that they might see and comprehend the image of the world that we create with our gaze. This is the situation described in Rilke's poem *Der Hund* (June/July 1907) which begins: "Da oben wird das Bild von einer Welt | aus Blicken immerfort erneut und gilt." The dog appears next to the man, quietly, secretly, pushing through this created image, "und wie im Zweifel seine Wirklichkeit | weggebend an das Bild, das er vergißt, || um dennoch immer wieder sein Gesicht | hineinzuhalten, fast mit einem Flehen, | beinah begreifend, nah am Einverstehen | und doch verzichtend: denn er wäre nicht" (WA 2: 641).[31] The dog's proffering of its face and its gaze (both

[30] Compare Rilke's remark from the *Improvisationen aus dem Capreser Winter*: "Kommen einem die Tiere nicht | manchmal, als bäten sie: nimm mein Gesicht?" (WA 3: 12). This cycle of poems was written in Capri between December 1906 and February 1907, the same period during which he also wrote *Eine Begegnung* (see below).

[31] The temporal proximity and similarity of the imagery has led several critics to assume that *Der Hund* is based on Rilke's encounter with Cézanne's self-portrait (e.g. Kuh 100: "Hier geht es thematisch um

meanings implied in "Gesicht") almost results in complete understanding and total integration of the dog into the human world, but the process nevertheless stops short, because if the dog were ever fully to comprehend the human world, it would cease to be a dog.

Close Encounters

And yet, there are moments when a complete understanding between man and dog is nevertheless possible, as long as such encounters are random and fleeting and not dependent upon structures of ownership and responsibility that render human–dog relations so difficult for Rilke. Thus, in a December 1912 letter to Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis, Rilke describes a recent encounter in Cordoba with a "kleine häßliche Hündin," heavily pregnant with a brood of "zufälliger Junge":

> es war kein rühmliches Tier, [...] aber sie kam, da wir ganz allein waren, so schwer es ihr fiel, zu mir herüber und hob ihre von Sorge und Innerlichkeit vergrößerten Augen auf und begehrte meinen Blick, – und in dem ihren war wahrhaftig alles, was über den Einzelnen hinausgeht, ich weiß nicht wohin, in die Zukunft oder ins Unbegreifliche; es löste sich so, daß sie ein Stück Zucker von meinem Kaffee abbekam, aber nebenbei, o so nebenbei, wir lasen gewissermaßen die Messe zusammen, die Handlung war an sich nichts als Geben und Annehmen, aber der Sinn und der Ernst und unsere ganze Verständigung war grenzenlos. (*Briefe*, 383)

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das Selbstbildnis des Paul Cézanne, das die Polarität seines Daseins darstellt"), even though the poem is written before the retrospective exhibition opened. Patrick Bridgwater suggests that it is in fact "probably based on Goya's famous 'The Dog'" (31)—presumably because of the way the dog enters the image "ganz unten," but there is no further evidence to support this claim. The poem and the letter use "the dog image in so similar a way that it has been misinterpreted as representing Cézanne," Bridgwater continues, "whereas in reality it stands, like the panther, for Rilke himself." This reading conforms to the dominant interpretation of Rilke's animal poems, which almost invariably reads them as reflections on the life of the poet, thus immediately negating any significance figure of the specific animal or of animality *per se* might have in Rilke's poetics.

This impromptu, quasi-religious communion is taken by Rilke to indicate that his "nouvelle opération," as he calls his new poetic project, should not be dependent on any human intervention, and that his true calling is in fact "gleichsam am Menschlichen vorbei, ans Äußerste zu kommen" (383). What is more, such an encounter is only possible "auf Erden": this decidedly inglorious, lowly animal is the very antithesis of the sort of sublime and beautiful creatures that might traditionally have been deemed worthy of poetry and art. But then the adulation of such noble creatures—lions and eagles and swans—no doubt reflected a warped and disproportionate idea of the significance and worth of the human in the grand scheme of things. In this sense, this ugly Spanish bitch is far closer to the poisoned rats in Chandos's milk cellar, with the notable distinction that she does not have to be sacrificed in order to inaugurate an experience of mystical harmony and oneness.

This experience in Cordoba echoes a short text of Rilke's entitled *Eine Begegnung*, written in Capri in January 1907. On a deserted road outside of town, a traveller encounters a stray dog, which casts "merkwürdig sichere Blicke nach dem Fremden," none of which "geht verloren." The setting is explicitly allegorical: the text specifies that this road is "ein beliebiger Weg," the 'only prerequisite' being that it is deserted. The man, then, is Everyman, and the dog is "Everydog"—and not, as should be clear by now, "Everyanimal," since, in Rilke, true encounters between man and other species of animal are practically impossible.

The dog appears suddenly, "wie ein Einfall," and begins to bark at the stranger expectantly, joyously waiting for a sign from the man.

> Der Hund in freudiger Erwartung:
>
> Es steht noch bevor.
>
> Er schluchzt vor Gefühlsüberfülle. Endlich stürzt er sich, das Gesicht hinaufhaltend, nochmals vor den rascher ausschreitenden Mann: Jetzt kommt es, denkt er, und hält sein Gesicht hin, inständig als Erkennungszeichen.
>
> Jetzt kommt es.
>
> Was? Sagt der Fremde, einen Augenblick zögernd.
>
> Die Spannung in den Augen des Hundes geht in Verlegenheit über, in Zweifel, in Bestürzung. Ja wenn der Mann gar nicht weiß, was kommen soll, wie soll es dann kommen? — Beide müssen es wissen; nur dann kommt es. (WA 11: 981–82)

The dog proffers its face in joyful expectancy, but the stranger doesn't know what it is expecting, or how to meet this expectation. Following this disappointment, the dog's and the man's eyes no longer meet. The dog doesn't understand why the man isn't fulfilling his part of the bargain. Such a small thing (*Kleinigkeit*) is all it would take, but the man insists, "Es ist keine Kleinigkeit." At this the dog is taken aback: communication has actually taken place between them, but only in order to announce the impossibility of a real exchange between the two.

> Der Hund erschrickt: Wie (er faßt sich mühsam), wenn ich doch fühle, daß wir ... Mein Inneres ... meine ...
>
> Sprich es nicht aus, unterbricht ihn der Fremde fast zornig. Sie stehen einander gegenüber. Diesmal gehen ihre Blicke ineinander, die des Mannes in die des Hundes, wie Messer in ihre Scheiden gehen. (982)

The two gazes meet finally, sharply, like two knives being sheathed, betokening the potential for violent conflict instead of amicable communication. The dog, which at first had been behaving "absichtlich hündisch," now backs down, and assumes a subservient role. "Ich möchte etwas für dich tun. Alles möchte ich für dich tun. Alles," he says. The man walks on, pretending not to have understood a word, feigning

insouciance, but still keeping an eye on the dog, which in turn playfully runs about until it finally, "ohne ein Wort," picks up a stone in its mouth which it had been playing with as though it were alive.

> Nun bin ich unschädlich und kann nichts mehr sagen; das liegt in dem Nicken, mit dem er sich zurückwendet. Es ist etwas beinah Vertrauliches in diesem Nicken, eine Art Vereinbarung, die aber, bei Gott, nicht zu ernst genommen werden soll. So obenhin und scherzhaft ist die ganze Sache, und so wird auch das Tragen des Steines aufgefaßt. (983)

Now that the dog has picked up a stone and is playfully, as it were, performing its silence for the man, the latter feels compelled to speak. He tells the dog that it's no use, and that he had been inclined to ask the dog who it was. "Du hättest Ich gesagt, denn Namen sind ja nicht zwischen uns," but it would only have confused things further. Certain memories are not allowed to resurface, and it is in man's nature to suppress them. These memories, presumably, are of a quasi-mythical, Edenic time in the past when man and animal lived together in harmony and understanding.

"Da der Fremde so sprach, hatte der Hund eingesehen, daß es nichts half, die Verstellung oberflächlichen Spielens fortzusetzen" (984). Instead, it takes up a hostile posture vis-à-vis the man, but the man recognises from the dog's body language that this is just pretence, and reassures the dog that they don't need to pronounce the word that caused the misunderstanding: "Du hast Recht, Lieber, es soll unausgesprochen bleiben zwischen uns, das Wort, das zu so viel Mißverständnissen Anlaß gab" (984). It is open to interpretation exactly what word is meant. It might be "I," as a marker of subjectivity that inevitably leads to confusion; but as we have seen, to

Rilke, all speech is "Mißverständnis," and so perhaps the word in question is in fact "the Word": λόγος.

At this, the dog carefully puts the stone back down, and instead follows him "unauffällig, anhänglich, ohne eigene Meinung, wie ein Hund seinem Herrn nachgeht. Das schmerzt ihn fast" (984).

> Nein, sagt er, nein; nicht so. Nicht nach dieser Erfahrung. Wir würden beide vergessen, was wir heute erlebt haben. Das Tägliche stumpft ab, und deine Natur hat die Neigung sich unter meine zu ordnen. Dabei wächst schließlich eine Verantwortung an, die dein ganzes Vertrauen sich auf mich stellt; du würdest mich überschätzen und von mir erwarten, was ich nicht leisten kann. Du würdest mich beobachten und gut-heißen, auch was nicht gut ist. Wenn ich dir eine Freude bereiten will: find ich denn auch eine? Und wenn du eines Tages traurig bist und klagst – werde ich dir helfen können? – Und du sollst nicht meinen, daß *ich* es bin, der dich sterben läßt. Nein, nein, nein. Geh, ich bitte dich: geh.
>
> Und der Mann begann beinah zu laufen, und es sah aus, als ob er vor etwas flüchtete. Erst allmählich mäßigte sich sein Schritt und schließlich ging er langsamer als vorher.
>
> Er dachte langsam: Was wohl sonst heute gesprochen worden wäre zwischen uns. Und wie man sich zum Schluß die Hand gereicht hätte –.
>
> Eine unbeschreibliche Sehnsucht regt sich in ihm. Er bleibt stehen und wendet sich rückwärts. Aber das Stück Weg biegt gleich hinter ihm in die Dämmerung hinein, die inzwischen eingebrochen ist, und es ist niemand zu sehen. (984–85)

By the end of the story, the man has been abandoned by the dog, and is facing backwards (*rückwärts*), which is precisely the attitude which, in the eighth *Duino Elegy*, children are forced to take up: "denn schon das frühe Kind | wenden wir um und zwingens, daß es rückwärts | Gestaltung sehe, nicht das Offene, das | im Tiergesicht so tief ist" (WA 2: 714). The animal too is forced to give up the pretence of silence and instead willingly abandons the subjectivity it had so nearly won through its en-

counter with the man. If he had indeed asked it "who are you"[32] it could have responded using the first person pronoun, the marker of subjecthood. But the animal cannot respond, not properly at least, not within the anthropocentric tradition where animals merely 'react' to external stimuli and cannot be said to 'respond' in the true sense of the word, which would require human consciousness, language, and all the rest of it. Indeed, as the man's final thoughts on the encounter suggest, had the animal responded, it would have ceased to be an animal: "Und wie man sich zum Schluß die Hand gereicht hätte"—the narrative otherwise contains multiple references to the dog's paws (*Pfoten*); only humans have and shake hands.[33]

Here, too, we find a reflection on both human and animal forgetting. Having reached an understanding, the dog takes up its proper place, following behind man, abdicating its subjectivity, the man is worried that they will both forget the experience of near-communication, and instead lapse into the old hierarchical structure, whereby the man is the master and the dog is the dog. Rather than being equals, the dog will now expect something of its master; as the only one capable of responding with

[32] Such a question is inherently childish, and hence indicative of a time before the original perversion of the human gaze away from the Open. Cf. Rilke's *Requiem auf den Tod eines Knaben* (1915), in which the child asks: "…Du Mutter, *wer* war eigentlich | der Hund?" (WA 3: 107).

[33] In Kafka's *Bericht für eine Akademie*, the ape, Rotpeter, reflects on the significance of the handshake in marking the transition from animal to human existence: "Das erste, was ich lernte, war: den Handschlag geben; Handschlag bezeugt Offenheit; mag nun heute, wo ich auf dem Höhepunkt meiner Laufbahn stehe, zu jenem ersten Handschlag auch das offene Wort hinzukommen" (KKAD 300). The entry into human society is performed by the handshake, which, we are told 'engenders openness', even as this entry into the domain of logos—into the prison-house of language—in fact marks a closing off of Rotpeter's access to the freedom that characterised his prelinguistic existence as an ape. The entire opening of the text is structured according to the dichotomies of 'open' and 'closed,' but both of these are implicitly opposed to true 'freedom,' which he only knew as an ape.

words, he is now responsible for the dog, a responsibility (*Verantwortung*) that the man feels both reluctant and ill-equipped to accept.

"An animal does not give its word," Derrida insists (*Animal*, 129). The animal cannot give its word because it doesn't have a word to give—or at the very least it has, as in Rilke, to remain "unausgprochen." Thus the 'pact' (*Vereinbarung*) between dog and master is inherently asymmetrical, yet there is a strong sense that man's word doesn't amount to much either, grounded as it is in innumerable metaphors and broken promises. The animal allowed to make promises cannot promise the other animals anything; the truth-value of man's word is incommensurable with the honesty of the animals' silence. In the past, this asymmetry might have been taken as proof of man's superiority, but for Rilke it comes instead to betoken his inadequacy and deficiency. We should both forget what we have experienced today, the man tells the dog, but what pains him most is that while the animal appears to have no trouble forgetting, it continues to haunt him. Most importantly, then, the animal now serves as a constant reminder to man of the agreement which he has entered into with it; the terms of which dictate that the animal shall be denied the word and moreover that it consistently forget that it ever wanted to speak in the first place. It is an agreement that was made long ago, asymmetrically, which is to say unilaterally, and which man now feels was unjust. But it is above all he who is bound by this agreement, and however much he might like to, he cannot simply back out of it. And now he finds himself alone on a deserted stretch of road built by people he does not know, leading he knows not where, forever a stranger in this constructed world.

Cunde la tarde en mi alma y reflexiono
Que el tigre vocativo de mi verso
Es un tigre de símbolos y sombras,
Una serie de tropos literarios
Y de memorias de la enciclopedia
Y no el tigre fatal, la aciaga joya
Que, bajo el sol o la diversa luna,
Va cumpliendo en Sumatra o en Bengala
Su rutina de amor, de ocio y de muerte.

—Jorge Luis Borges, "El otro tigre"[1]

Chapter 3

Fearful Symmetries

Pirandello's Tiger and the Resistance to Metaphor

I. Of Other Tigers

Tigers, it seems, are difficult to frame. Since well before Blake, the tiger has been regarded as the most beautiful and most ferocious of animals: a powerful symbol of sublime, unbridled Nature.[2] Naturally, then, man has sought to contain this beast, be it in the steady rhythm of trochaic tetrameter, or in the cages and enclosures of the zoo and the circus. Here the beauty and magnificence of nature is displayed—framed, as it were, by the power and ingenuity of man. The spectacle of the zoo is a performance of man's dominion over the animals, even as it caters to the fantasy of being able to escape, however briefly, from the confines of modern urban existence

[1] "Evening spreads in my spirit and I keep thinking | that the tiger I am calling up in my poem | is a tiger made of symbols and of shadows, | a series of literary tropes, | scraps remembered from encyclopaedias, | and not the deadly tiger, the fateful jewel | that in the sun or the deceptive moonlight | follows its paths, in Bengal or Sumatra, | of love, of indolence, of dying" (Borges 116–17, transl. modified).

[2] See for example Parsons. For a cultural history of the tiger, see Osterhammel, and Green who focuses primarily on non-Western attitudes towards tigers.

and gain access to 'wild' nature. The zoo experience thus relies on the spectator's ability to participate in this escapist illusion whilst remaining completely safe. If, as John Berger claims, "each cage is a frame round the animal inside it," (Berger 23) it is because that frame transforms it into an aesthetic object that can be studied at a safe distance. At once the index and the guarantor of human sovereignty, this frame marks the physical boundary between the human and the animal. At the same time, it also points to the constant re-assertion of the symbolic boundary between nature and culture, and hence to the production of nature *within* culture.

This function becomes all the more prominent when the physical boundary is rendered invisible, as was the case with Carl Hagenbeck's revolutionary new design for his *Tierpark*, which opened at Stellingen near Hamburg in 1907.[3] The so-called "Hagenbeck Revolution" was in part the result of an attempt to address visitor dissatisfaction with the cages separating them from the animals. Hagenbeck had devised a system of discreet moats around the enclosures, wide enough to prevent the animals from escaping, whilst providing visitors with an uninterrupted line of sight. The quasi-authentic stagings in Hagenbeck's enclosures thus offered visitors supposedly unmediated access to the animals, all within the cultural dominion of man. Disguised in this way, without any metal bars to act as a constant visual reminder of the separation, the frame begins to appear almost natural and unobtrusive rather than violent and artificial. Moreover, although the individual cages separating the spectators from the animals on display are rendered invisible in the Hagenbeck model, the

[3] For a detailed account of the development and influence of Hagenbeck's new model zoo, see Ames.

very existence of the zoo as an enclosed space for animals within the context of the modern city points to the stark and constantly reinforced demarcation of nature vis-à-vis culture. Animals have a clearly defined space which they are permitted to occupy in modern society, the boundaries of which they must under no circumstances be allowed to transgress.[4]

The difficulty of framing a tiger is arguably the subject of Luigi Pirandello's 1915 novel *Si gira...* (later republished as *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* in 1925).[5] The novel consists of seven notebooks written in the first person by Serafino Gubbio, a cameraman working for the fictional *Kosmograph* film studio in Rome, who is involved in filming a large-scale exotic adventure film, entitled *La donna e la tigre*. For this production, *Kosmograph* have procured a tiger from the Zoological Garden in Rome (designed by Carl Hagenbeck).[6] The tiger, we learn, had tried repeated-

[4] Christina Wessely succinctly illustrates this point in her book *Künstliche Tiere*, by means of a map of the Vienna underground (9–10).

[5] The novel has a relatively complex genesis and publication history. It was first published in instalments in the *Nuova Antologia* 1915 under the title *Si gira...*, and appeared in a single volume the following year with the same title. In 1925 it was republished with minor stylistic revisions and the longer title by which it is known today. Pirandello had initially sought to have it published in *La Repubblica*'s literary supplement in 1913, at which point it was entitled *La tigre*, but it was rejected in large part because the editors found the narrator's long, philosophical monologues too boring and distracting from the main business of the central plot. For a thorough account of the novel's publication history, see Càllari 18–24.

[6] The moated enclosures of the *Tierpark* were not the only facet of the radically new possibilities in the exhibition of live animals ushered in by the Hagenbeck Revolution. The growing film industry was also keen to offer its audiences an escape from their everyday urban environment and zoos like Hagenbeck's were only too happy to furnish the major studios with wild animals for the adventure and safari films, which were hugely popular at the time. These films offered moviegoers an excellent means of experiencing wild nature and the thrill of the hunt all from the comfort of the cinema. Due to the prodigious costs and logistical problems involved, however, the 'jungles' and 'savannahs' of these films were for the most part artificially reconstructed on sets in Europe and North America. Thus legendary American producer and filmmaker William N. Selig's notorious fake safari film, *Hunting Big Game in Africa* (1909), was shot entirely at his studio in Chicago. Two years previously, Ole Olsen,

ly to jump across the moat separating her from the unsuspecting visitors, until the zoo decided the animal was a liability, and sold her to the studio. Now her ferocity is to be exploited for the purposes of this colonial melodrama: she is to be shot 'live' on camera by the romantic leading man, Aldo Nuti, during the climactic scene. Gubbio, who will be the one in charge of filming the scene, is disgusted by the fate of this beautiful creature: "In the midst of a universal sham," he writes, "her death alone will be genuine."[7]

The eternal tension between reality and artifice is one of the dominant preoccupations in all of Pirandello's work, but nowhere is it as strongly linked to the question of the animal as in *Si gira*. And yet this aspect of the text remains critically

filmmaker and founder of Nordisk Film, had purchased a pair of lions from Hagenbeck for use in his 1907 film *Løvejagten* (*The Lion Hunt*), directed by Viggo Larsen who also starred alongside Olsen as one of the two hunters. The film combined footage from the Copenhagen Zoo with scenes filmed on the small island of Elleore just north of Roskilde. Despite the fact that the 'jungle' was entirely fake, as Eric Ames observes, Olsen's safari film nevertheless "made a strong and, on some level, undeniable claim to authenticity, that is, all of the animals that Olsen acquired from Hagenbeck were literally shot and killed before the camera. Unlike the living habitat, which needed the bodies on display to thrive, photography and film allowed for the continued visibility of animals in spite of—and in this case precisely because of—their death" (Ames 200).

The same is true of Selig's film. As Cynthia Chris explains, "Selig renovated his studio to resemble an African jungle, purchased an elderly zoo lion, and hired an actor who easily doubled for 'T.R.' and some black Chicago actors to pose as African porters. While the on-screen Roosevelt fired blanks, someone off-screen shot and killed the lion" (11). The film was conceived as a direct competitor to Cherry Kearton's *Roosevelt in Africa*, a documentary of one of the president's many hunting expeditions. Kearton's film was shot entirely on location and at great expense but flopped at the box-office and with critics, who complained that the film lacked any kind of drama or narrative force. Selig's film, by comparison, was a runaway success, and helped pave the way for a slew of wildlife adventures and gaudy Hollywood romances set in exotic, far-flung locations, much like the *Kosmograph* feature which stands at the centre of Pirandello's novel.

[7] Pirandello *Shoot!*, 60. Scott-Moncrieff's translation, published in 1926, remains the only version of the novel in English, and, unlike his translation of Proust, it has not been 'updated,' despite the significant number of errors and omissions. In 2005 it was reissued by the University of Chicago Press with a new introduction by Tom Gunning. All quotations refer to this edition, although I have frequently emended the translation. Page numbers for the Italian refer to volume two of the critical edition of Pirandello's novels, *Tutti i romanzi*, edited by Giovanni Macchia and Mario Costanzo.

underexamined,[8] not least, I would argue, because of the dominant role Walter Benjamin's discussion of the novel in his essay "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" has assumed in shaping the critical reception of the text. Benjamin cites Pirandello as one of the first authors to have recognised the alienating effects of the cinematic apparatus and the concomitant disappearance of the aura ("Kunstwerk," 489), but his reading is exclusively focused on the relationship of man to technology, which, to be sure, occupies a prominent place in the novel, but, as this chapter will demonstrate, the man–machine binary must be seen in relation to the binary man–animal (or man–nature) with which Pirandello consistently juxtaposes it. It is this ternary structure (animal–man–machine) and the constant oscillation and cross-pollination of its constituent parts which produces the central tension of the novel and makes it not only an important document of its time, reflecting many of the aesthetic and existential concerns of European modernism but also, particularly at a formal level, emblematic of the 'new' literary animal whose symbolic value is no longer stable and easily determined.

But why should tigers in particular be difficult to frame? On a practical level, of course, tigers are not any harder to 'frame' than any other wild animal. More ab-

[8] Even what little criticism there is concerning the figure of the animal in Pirandello's works has surprisingly little to say about the *Kosmograph* tiger. Robert Perroud's short article on Pirandello's "bestiary" offers a clear and concise account of the ways in which Pirandello employs animals in his texts as a foil to human insecurities and pretensions. He singles out *Si gira* as one of two texts in which animals play a central role, as opposed to texts in which they perform only an epithetic or figurative function, but the majority of his essay is devoted to the other, "Il signore della nave" (1916). Franco Zangrilli's *Il bestiario di Pirandello* is encyclopaedic in scope and is useful as a compendium of all the animal imagery employed by Pirandello throughout his literary career, but his approach is purely thematic and self-avowedly concerned primarily with illustrating how Pirandello made use of "la figura dell'animale per affermare i valori umani e la complessità dell'individuo" (144).

stractly, however, as soon as the frame has been established and the distinction between nature and culture been drawn, there are 'always already' two distinct tigers: one natural and one cultural. In his poem "El otro tigre," Jorge Luis Borges faces the problem that the tiger he has captured in verse is not the one he was looking for. The greater the symbolic and cultural significance of the animal, the harder it becomes to grasp fully through language, and thus Borges's tiger becomes nothing more than "a series of literary tropes." In the final stanza, Borges makes a further attempt at locating "the other tiger, the one not in this poem," even though he knows that this one too will be "un sistema de palabras | Humanas y no el tigre vertebrado | Que, más allá de las mitologías, | Pisa la tierra."[9] Yet something, Borges writes, compels him to pursue this vague, foolish, and ancient adventure ("esta aventura indefinida, | Insensata y antigua"). The very concept of the frame, of boundedness and finitude, introduces the possibility of surplus, superfluity, overabundance, and, conversely, lack. Borges's other tiger is forever beyond the reach of his poem because the process of framing it transforms it into a metaphor, a placeholder which exists only by virtue of pointing beyond itself, to something that it is not, in this case the 'real' tiger, but also the chimerical assemblage of associations and inferences adherent to it.

In *Si gira*, the question of the identity (and location) of the real tiger comes to occupy a central position in the framework of the narrative. The *Kosmograph* tiger forms the conceptual and dramatic centre of a novel preoccupied with the juxtaposi-

[9] In Reid's translation: "a system, an arrangement of human language, | and not the flesh-and-bone tiger | that, out of reach of all mythologies, | paces the earth" (Borges 118–19).

tion of the constructed, social world with the genuine, unmediated natural world.[10] On the one hand, as the embodiment of pure and artless Nature, of the irreducibly, inaccessibly Real, the tiger serves as a foil to the artificial "sham" of human existence. But on the other hand, it also has the potential to trouble or even undermine the strict separation of reality and artifice: against the fake-jungle backdrop in the final scene, the tiger's literal death will violently interrupt the fictional logic of the film. Jonathan Burt has argued that "the animal image is a form of rupture in the field of representation."

> Although the animal on screen can be burdened with multiple metaphorical significances, giving it an ambiguous status that derives from what might be described as a kind of semantic overload, the animal is also marked as a site where these symbolic associations collapse into each other. (*Animals in Film*, 11)

Burt is referring specifically to the presence of 'real' animals on screen, not on the page, and his argument is thus dependent on the peculiar ontology of the cinematic image as it relates to animals in film, and thus to questions of performance and identity as well as to representation. Because animals are perceived as lacking the necessary subjectivity and interiority to be said to 'act' in any conventional sense of the word, the status of the animal within a staged performance, particularly in the medium of film where montage and other framing techniques allow for a greater degree of authorial control, is always inherently double: the identity of the animal as part of a fictional or constructed diegesis versus the viewer's underlying awareness of the animal as an extra-diegetic presence which has been 'made' to participate in the ar-

[10] Thus Franca Angelini avers that the tiger "rappresenta in certo senso la chiave di lettura" (21) of the novel, but she does not develop this claim more fully.

tifice.[11] In a sense, this doubleness is analogous to that of Borges's tiger, except that whilst in his poem the 'real' tiger is perennially absent, in the cinematic image it is forever and troublingly present. And so, even though literary animals cannot be said to be 'real' in the same sense as animals on stage and screen, they nevertheless cause (or can cause) a certain kind 'rupture' in the field of representation *qua* constructed, framed space. In both instances, moreover, this rupture pertains ultimately to the relationship between animals and metaphor, and, perhaps, their position within human language as such.

The animal, excluded from the domain of language, is 'carried over' into human discourse in the form of a metaphor; in an oblique reference to our own animal origins, human language relies on animality to describe that which is not animal, namely ourselves. This is just one of the ways in which animals become 'available' to humans by means of λόγος. This is also why, as Akira Lippit asserts, "animals resist metaphorization" ("Death of an Animal," 13): the animality of the metaphor is fundamentally at odds with the animality of the animal. That is to say, animals can be made to signify via a transferential economy of epithets and attributes, but the meaning that emerges through this transaction is always ultimately irreconcilable with the animal itself. In short, there is always at some level an irresoluble tension between what the animal *is* and what the animal *means*. The ontological status of the tiger is never called into question as explicitly in Pirandello's novel as in Borges's poem, but

[11] On the issue of animals and performance see the special issue of *The Drama Review* edited by Una Chaudhuri, particularly the essays by Chaudhuri and Michael Peterson. On the status of animals as "anti-cinema" and "anti-performance" see also Sheehan "Against the Image."

by means of its *mise en abyme* conceit of the film within the novel, *Si gira* nevertheless succeeds in mobilising *both* of the aforementioned 'ruptures' (i.e. the intrusive presence and the elusive absence of the 'real' tiger) at a formal and narrative level.

II. Frames within Frames

The destabilising or rupturing effect of the tiger in Pirandello's novel reaches its fullest iteration in the climactic scene, when Aldo Nuti, playing the hunter, is supposed to shoot the tiger while Gubbio turns the handle of his camera. What actually happens is that Nuti turns and shoots the leading lady, Varia Nestoroff, who is standing outside the cage, and is then himself promptly torn to pieces by the ferocious tiger. Finally, someone from outside thrusts his arm inside the cage and shoots the tiger at point-blank range and Gubbio is pulled from the cage, still compulsively turning the handle of his camera, to safety.

How did this happen? Leading up to this moment is an extremely convoluted web of intrigue, betrayal, and death. Nuti's apparently erratic act appears to be a carefully premeditated murder/suicide, perpetrated in order to avenge the death of his friend Giorgio Mirelli, who had committed suicide after breaking off his engagement to Varia Nestoroff, with whom Nuti had fallen madly in love. Nuti thus blames himself and her for his friend's death and concocts a plan to set things right. The entire novel may be said to revolve around this love triangle, but its plot is significantly more complicated, brimming with extraneous details, digressions, and petty conflicts. In the interests of space, I will refrain from providing a more detailed outline of the plot and instead propose that its very complexity is itself a function of the

opposition of reality and artifice with which the novel operates: in other words, the plot of the film, which Gubbio never tires of deriding as vulgar and melodramatic, is nothing compared to the hopelessly convoluted structure of 'real life', which, after all, is also a construct.[12]

The novel's plot is thus inherently *excessive*, full of superfluous details. This unmanageable superabundance of plot led Giacomo Debenedetti to characterize *Si gira* as a "romanzo da fare"—literally, a novel to be made, or a novel in the making—by which he means not a new literary genre but rather precisely the end of an established one, namely the nineteenth century realist novel, which here practically implodes under the weight of its disparate and internecine narrative strands:

> sin dal 1915, dal momento della sua stesura, il romanzo si era presentato come un "romanzo da fare", con l'implicita aggravante che tutto si sarebbe distrutto, avrebbe perso valore e senso, se un dissennato autore si fosse arrischiato a congegnarne gli spunti, la storia multiforme e polivalente di un romanzo fatto. (257)[13]

The term "romanzo da fare" is an explicit reference to the subtitle of Pirandello's most famous play, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore: commedia da fare* (1921),[14] and in-

[12] Guido Baldi, for example, remarks on the fundamental paradox that "il romanzo è una continua, accanita requisitoria contro la 'stupidità' (il sostantivo, con il suo aggettivo, vi ricorre un numero impressionante di volte) delle finzioni cinematografiche; eppure la trama centrale, tutta la vicenda che coinvolge la Nestoroff, il Mirelli, il Nuti, Luisetta Cavalena, con il relativo scioglimento sanguinoso, sembra proprio uno di quei soggetti da film anni Dieci, di un dannunzianesimo di seconda mano, con al centro la sua brava *femme fatale*, la donna-tigre distruttrice di uomini, in opposizione alla fanciulla innocente e salvifica" (Baldi 123).

[13] At a later point in his analysis, Debenedetti describes the novel as consisting of "tante storie che insorgono, e tutte cercano di predominare, di accamparsi in un punto focale, che ne farebbe la storia centrale, mentre poi tutte, facendo rispettare la loro singola prepotenza, collaborano a quello che si potrebbe chiamare il loro intreccio" (280).

[14] In fact, the first recorded mention of the idea for the play is in a letter from Pirandello to his son Stefano dated 23 July 1917, in which he refers to the project as a "romanzo da fare," although in this

deed there is more than a casual relation between the novel and Pirandello's theatre. *Si gira* marks a transitional moment in Pirandello's passage from prose to drama, and more specifically away from the nineteenth-century realism which characterises many of his earlier prose works toward a more fully-fledged modernist aesthetic. The almost universal assurance among critics that the theatre constituted the true *telos* of Pirandello's literary career has meant that, until relatively recently, his novels and short stories were regarded as merely propaedeutic to that grander project and rarely if ever considered in their own right.[15] Thus, Arcangelo Leone di Castris, one of the first scholars to take the novel seriously on its own terms, writes that "*Si gira* vale soprattutto come documento di poetica":

> come testimonianza singolarmente esplicita, in un contesto pur ricco di risonanza propriamente artistica, di quell'evento naturale ma pure travagliato che è il passaggio di Pirandello all'esperienza teatrale. (132)[16]

This characterisation of the novel as a document of Pirandello's poetics dovetails neatly with Debenedetti's reading. Firstly, as Leone de Castris notes, the setting in a film studio involves a manifest theatricality and attention to different levels of per-

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case it is likely that he simply meant that it was a novel he had yet to write (Klettke 92).

[15] In large part, the exclusive dominance of the theatre in Pirandello scholarship has its roots in Adriano Tilgher's enormously influential essay "Il teatro di Luigi Pirandello" published in 1923, which posited the Bergsonian opposition between Life and Form as the central dialectic at the heart of all of Pirandello's works. The essay not only set the tone for Pirandello studies but also exerted a powerful influence over Pirandello himself. Furthermore, as Franco Zangrilli notes, Tilgher's lasting influence on Pirandello criticism was not only theoretical but also methodological, namely through his practice of regarding the novels and short stories as nothing more than raw material for the dramas ("Pirandello novelliere," 288). For an account of the personal and professional relationship between Pirandello and Tilgher see Giudice (chapter six); Illiano; and Caputi 106–8.

[16] Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti similarly describes the novel as "una dichiarazione di poetica" (86), arguing, with Debenedetti, that the machine-like, anti-subjective impassivity Gubbio aspires to is at heart a critique of the realist ideal of objective observation which Pirandello is definitively moving away from in the novel.

formance and representation which Pirandello would explore more explicitly in his theatrical works, most obviously in his so-called "teatro nel teatro" trilogy (*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, 1921, *Ciascuno a suo modo*, 1924, and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, 1928–9), in particular the second of the three, which redeploys the Nuti–Nestoroff–Mirelli love-triangle, but introduces an additional layer of representation: The play is about an actress named Delia Morello, whose fiancé, the artist Giorgio Salvi, committed suicide on the eve of their marriage after he discovered that she had had an affair with his brother-in-law Michele Rocca. While these characters perform on stage, in the audience sit Baron Nuti and his former lover, Amelia Moreno, who have each come separately to see the play in order to verify their suspicion that it is really about the scandal surrounding them in 'real life'.

A central concern in these meta-theatrical works is the troubling of the traditional boundaries between characters and actors, actors and audience, as well as intra- and extra-diegetic space more generally—in short, the plays explore the limits and possibilities of *framing*. Evidently, the possibility of involving the audience and thwarting its expectations regarding theatrical conventions afforded Pirandello more room in which to explore these particular problems of representation than prose—or, for that matter, cinema—would have, because of the necessary separation between the text—or the film actor—and the reader/audience: a separation which the actors in the novel lament and which forms the crux of Benjamin's argument regarding the disappearance of the aura in the age of mechanical reproducibility. Seen in this context, *Si gira* does indeed appear to pave the way for Pirandello's theatrical conversion, and my goal here is neither to dispute nor affirm the validity of such a teleology, ex-

cept insofar as I am necessarily making a case for the novel's importance in its own right, independent of whatever artistic trajectory its author may have followed subsequently. The question, rather, is how the meditation on the nature and instability of the frame which the novel stages is influenced and informed by the central position occupied by the tiger.

The Lady and the Tiger

There are several distinct levels at which the novel engages, challenges, and undermines established frames. Firstly, there are the explicit reflections on the actors' discomfort vis-à-vis the image they see of themselves on the screen, where, stripped of their aura, they hardly recognise themselves. This dichotomy is further complicated by the discrepancy between individuals' self-perception and the identities they are forced to inhabit in their everyday lives—a favourite *topos* of Pirandello's and a salient feature of his novels from *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1902) to *Uno, nessuno e centomila* (1926), not to mention innumerable other prose and dramatic works, perhaps most prominently the play *Così è (se vi pare)* (1917). Thus, late in the novel, we discover that Varia Nestoroff is not in fact quite the 'man-eater' she is reputed to be, but is really more of a *femme fatale malgré elle*, as it were, unable to escape from the identity which others have constructed for her.[17] This realisation highlights another facet of the nov-

[17] The name "Varia" may itself be taken as an indication of the instability and plurality of her *vari*ous identities, a reading ironically offset by the curious recurring error on the part of several Pirandello scholars who give the actress's name as "Vera" Nestoroff—in fact, however, there is no "true" Nestoroff in the novel. See, for example, Debenedetti 263; Vettori 98 & *passim*; and Ganeri, who claims in her otherwise excellent analysis of the novel that "Vera" is Varia's stage name (170, 195) but there is no basis for this assertion in the text that I can find.

el, namely its deliberate use of cliché and narrative commonplaces as a means of critiquing those very conventions. As numerous critics have observed, the character of Varia Nestoroff appears to be a more or less overt nod to the dangerous and alluring heroines that populate the novels of Gabriele D'Annunzio (cf. Angelini 25; Baldi 147; *i.a.*). That is to say, Nestoroff has good reason to feel that her identity is an artificial construct imposed on her from outside: she is the unwitting star of a lurid melodrama, the conventions of which require that she play the part of the exotic and sexually voracious femme fatale.[18]

"She has something in her, this woman, which the others do not succeed in understanding," writes Gubbio of the Russian actress, "because even she herself does not clearly understand it. One guesses it, however, from the violent expressions which she assumes, involuntarily, unconsciously, in the parts that are assigned to her" (39). The peculiar and uncontrollable violence of her expressions, Gubbio observes, is the result of the fact that Nestoroff, more so than any of the other actors with the company, takes her roles seriously, no matter how grotesque or contradicto-

[18] Nestoroff's identity is even more meta-textually overdetermined, insofar as the pervasive semantic association between her and the tiger, as well as the suicide of her former lover Giorgio Mirelli, also recall the Russian countess Nata from the 1875 novel *Tigre reale* by Pirandello's fellow Sicilian, the Italian *verista* Giovanni Verga. The novel's title refers to the countess Nata, whose felinity is one of her most prominent characteristics, invoked the moment she is introduced in the text: "si diceva avesse spinto al suicidio il solo uomo che avesse mai amato, e amato alla follia, un amore da leonessa — si chiamava Nata, nome dolce come due note di musica" (13). Verga himself later adapted the novel for the screen, and the film, directed by Giovanni Pastrone, was released in 1916, starring Pina Menichelli as the countess. The film was conceived as the second part of Pastrone's "dittico dannunziano," the first being *Il Fuoco*, based on Gabriele D'Annunzio's eponymous novel and also starring Menichelli in her first major role. As if to solidify these inter-textual references, when Pirandello approached Italian film pioneer Anton Giulio Bragaglia with the aim of producing a film version of *Si gira*, he suggested Menichelli for the role of la Nestoroff. The film, however, was never made. See Càllari 88; Nichols and Bazzoni 10–11; and Aristarco. For more on Nestoroff and Menichelli, see also dalle Vacche 55–60.

ry. "She alone ruins more films than all the other actors in the four companies put together," he continues:

> For one thing, she always moves out of the picture [esce dal *campo*]; when by any chance she does not move out, her action is so disordered [scomposta], her face so strangely altered and disguised, that in the rehearsal theatre almost all the scenes in which she has taken part turn out useless and have to be done again. (39)

These "demoniacal pictures [immagini da ossessa]" appear uncanny to everyone, not least to Nestoroff herself, who is terrified by her own image on the screen: "She sees there someone who is herself but whom she does not know" (40). Nestoroff's turbulent past, Gubbio surmises, has in fact been a series of desperate attempts on her part to catch up with this other self which "lives and suffers, so to speak, *outside herself* [*di là da se stessa*]" (41).[19] Nestoroff's awareness of an implacable *ossessa* who is at once inside and outside herself corresponds to Gubbio's affirmation at the very beginning of his notebooks that "there is a *something more* in everything [c'è un *oltre* (lit. 'beyond') in tutto]" (4), and which, moreover, he alone is in a position to perceive, thanks to his detachment and impassivity. Most people, he writes, either cannot or will not look beyond the surface, beyond the "mechanical framework [congegno … meccanico]" of life. His disdain for the superficiality and stupidity of modern life is focused especially on the medium of cinema, which, as he never tires of asserting, embodies all the dehumanising and stupefying traits of technological, capitalist modernity.[20]

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[19] I have taken the liberty of reinstating the original italics which the University of Chicago Press edition omits.

[20] Pirandello did not share the Futurists' enthusiasm for the metropolis and the mechanisation of

Following his opening invective against the senseless speed and superficiality of modern life and the endless search for distraction under the motto "Svaghiamoci!" (let us be entertained), Gubbio admits that he too is engaged in these "lavori *per lo svago*" (labours for entertainment/amusement) in his capacity as a cameraman for a movie studio, but he explicitly disavows his complicity by insisting that he is merely the (im)passive, disembodied and depersonalised hand that turns the handle of his machine. His nickname, "Si Gira," refers to this action—"girare" means to turn, and coupled with the impersonal pronoun "si" the phrase means essentially "we're turning" (in English the equivalent phrase would be "roll camera... Action!")[21]—but it also appropriates his initials, S.G., transforming Serafino Gubbio into a depersonalised, automatic function of the filmmaking process, and by extension of the all-consuming socio-political machinery of capitalist modernity.[22] "I am an operator," he writes. "But, as a matter of fact, being an operator, in the world in which I live and upon which I live, does not in the least mean operating. I operate nothing [Io non opero nulla]" (5). "Operatore" recalls "operaio" (worker) via the shared root of "opera" (work). Like the alienated factory worker toiling by the assembly line, Gubbio, the operator, turns the handle of his camera in the service of the film industry—or "dream

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modern life. Many of his novels, *Si gira* being prime among them, contain lengthy passages written "contro il trionfalismo modernolatra e l'incipiente industria (anche culturale)" (Grignani "Sintassi," 9).

[21] Scott-Moncrieff translates the phrase as "Shoot!" fortuitously adding a layer of ambiguity not present in the original, given the climactic scene in which the tiger is "shot" both literally and figuratively by two disembodied hands.

[22] As previously indicated, this aspect of the novel has been the subject of by far the most critical scrutiny, and I will only engage it cursorily in the present chapter. In addition to the numerous analyses already cited, see also the essays by Ochsner and Ricciardi.

factory" to use a label that would later be applied to the American film studios in Hollywood. In other words, the *work* of art in the age of mechanical reproduction is something created by machines, not by human beings, and Gubbio morosely anticipates the day when his services will no longer be required and the entire process can be carried out automatically. But for the time being at least, Gubbio is not yet superfluous, for, as he explains, he "do[es] not always turn the handle at the same speed, but faster or slower as may be required" (6). Someday, he says, they may come up with a machine that "will go by itself [*girerà da sé*]" but for the moment, there is still an irreducible trace of human subjectivity in the impersonal "si" of "si gira" as opposed to the utterly mechanical automatism of "girare da sé."

Running parallel to Gubbio's constant gestures of self-effacement is his conviction that his very apartness imbues him with a unique perspective on the world which allows him to see past the false exterior and uncover the workings of the "mechanical framework" that determines the shape of everyday life and human consciousness. Insofar as this idealistic self-stylisation as an Archimedean, non-participant observer is credible (which is not very far), it is made possible only by Gubbio's self-confessed complicity in the creation and policing of the boundaries of that framework. He may not literally cause the actors to move, "as an organ-grinder creates the music by turning his handle" (6), but he sets the limits within which they can act. "This is what I do," he writes:

> I set up my machine on its knock-kneed tripod. One or more stage hands, following my directions, mark out on the carpet or on the stage with a long wand and a blue pencil the limits within which the actors have to move to keep the picture in focus.
>
> This is called *marking out the ground* [*segnare il campo*]. (5)

Thus the process of filming is predicated on an act of demarcation that establishes the *campo* within which the action is to take place. The problem with Nestoroff is that in her performances she consistently transgresses these established limits ("esce dal *campo*"), rupturing the frame and rendering the take unusable. Even though Nestoroff appears on the surface to be the prototypical film diva, and, as I have indicated, is in many ways predetermined to fulfil that role, in actual fact her irrepressible outward momentum, beyond herself (*di là da se stessa*), towards the *oltre*, constantly threatens to undermine the rigid "mechanical framework" of the film medium. Moreover, this tendency of hers, Gubbio insists, is entirely unconscious and involuntary, which on the one hand implies that it is simply 'in her nature', so to speak, but it is also a structural consequence of the semantic overload which determines her character. In other words, she is 'difficult to frame' in a way analogous to that of the tiger, and it is by no means coincidental that these two figures should be intimately linked at a number of distinct levels within the text—indeed it is the persistent semantic fluctuation at work between *la donna* and *la tigre* that allows for the spectacular collapse of the multiple literal and metaphorical valences attached to the two that transpires in the climactic triple death scene.[23] As the novel progresses, it becomes

[23] Luciana Martinelli observes that "nella scrittura pirandelliana la fluttuazione semantica dei lessemi instaura un processo di ampliamento della loro valenza, che di continuo fa slittare l'asse della significazione. I sintomi diventano simboli" (77). Martinelli presents an extremely cogent and rhetorically sophisticated reading of *Si gira*—her frequent attempts at psychoanalysing the author

increasingly ambiguous whether "she" refers to "la Nestoroff" or "la tigre"—the identical grammatical gender produces a discursive polyvalence within the text that the English translation cannot adequately reproduce.[24] The one echoes the other, and each statement about the tiger can, on some level, potentially be read as referring to the lady, and vice versa. This is one of the ways in which the tiger may be said to cross the boundary of its cage at a linguistic level.

III. "Più tigre della tigre"

The tiger, as we know, was only sold to *Kosmograph* because she had repeatedly threatened to leap across the moat and savage the spectators at the Villa Borghese. Gubbio caustically notes the hypocrisy inherent in the zoo's decision to destroy the tiger for her recalcitrance, given that the purpose of putting her on display in the first place was "to give the public a 'living idea' of natural history." For what could be more natural, Gubbio rhetorically asks, than for a tiger to assume "that the moat in question was put there on purpose so that she might try to jump it, and that those ladies and gentlemen stopped there in front of her in order that she might devour them if she succeeded in jumping it?" (58). Gubbio here presents the reader with the

notwithstanding—focusing specifically on the character of Varia Nestoroff and explores at length the complex web of associations that revolve around her and the tiger. Martinelli's primary concern is the representation of women in Pirandello's works, however, not the figure of the animal.

[24] In Italy it is customary to refer to actresses and female celebrities, particularly if they are young and sexually attractive, by their surname preceded by the definite article—la Cardinale, la Loren, la Bellucci, la Nestoroff. Scott-Moncrieff awkwardly renders "la Nestoroff" as "the Nestoroff" throughout his translation, seemingly in an effort to reproduce this practice and perhaps to convey a sense of the objectification of women. It should be noted, however, that the same rule also applies to male actors and celebrities (Aldo Nuti, for instance, is frequently referred to as "il Nuti" in the Italian, but never as "the Nuti" in the English), and thus any perceived or implied objectification is a facet of Italian culture—and, indeed, the culture of movie stardom itself—and not of the Italian language *per se*.

view from inside the cage, as it were, a non-anthropocentric perspective on the human world. From the tiger's point of view, the invisible boundaries of the Hagenbeck-style zoological garden represent a challenge to be overcome, rather than a safeguard to prevent the illusion of unfettered access to nature from becoming a gruesome reality. The Pirandellian *topos* of the characters' revolt against the role assigned to them thus applies, to a certain extent, to the tiger, who refuses to remain inside her enclosure at the zoo, but is ultimately forced to play the part of the ferocious beast that is put to death for the sake of human entertainment.

"There comes every day," writes Gubbio, "like myself, in front of your cage here, a lady intent on studying how you move, how you turn your head, how you look out of your eyes." She does this, Gubbio notes, in preparation for the part she is to play in the film, namely that of the English lady, "more tiger than the tiger" (più tigre della tigre). As it happens, la Nestoroff is not actually meant to play the title role in the film, but, says Gubbio, "[p]erhaps she does not yet know this, she thinks that the part is hers; and she comes here to study." (61) Once more the intimate connection between the *donna* and the *tigre* of the film's title is reinforced: in order to study for the part, in order to inhabit this role, she must be 'more' than the tiger, but her performance is nevertheless grounded in the pure animal being of the tiger in its cage.

This gesture of excess stands in correlation to the "something more" (*oltre*) which Gubbio sees in everything. The structural principle underlying his conception of reality is thus at base metaphorical: everything points beyond itself and overflows its limits. This, moreover, is also the source of mankind's separation from the animal world. Gubbio refers to this trait as *superfluity*: the condition of having more in one-

self than is necessary for one's survival. Whereas animals "have in themselves by nature only so much as suffices them," human beings "have in them a superfluity which constantly and vainly torments them, never making them satisfied with any conditions, and always leaving them uncertain of their destiny" (10). Superfluity sets man apart from nature, and is thus at once the source of his superiority and of his perpetual dissatisfaction and misery. It is this superfluity, which, "to afford itself an outlet [darsi uno sfogo], creates in nature an artificial world [mondo fittizio], a world that has a meaning and value for [man] alone" (10). Which is to say: this superfluity is language.

There is a distinction being made here between the earth (la terra), which is inhabited by and designed for animals, and the world (il mondo), which is man-made and artificial, the product of man's superfluity, which, exceeding the limits imposed on it by nature, requires an outlet. It is easy to see the parallel to Heidegger's conception of the animal as "poor in world" (*weltarm*) in contradistinction to human *Dasein*, which is "world-forming" (*weltbildend*). For Pirandello, too, the world is not a given, but rather always a dynamic construct, the product of human consciousness, albeit by no means the result of a concerted act of will on the part of any individual human being. This world of which man is the artificer is almost entirely beyond his control. On the contrary, he falls foul of his creation, it is nothing but a constant source of torment and dissatisfaction, in response to which he can do nothing but find new sluices through which to channel his superfluity. For Gubbio, this outlet is provided by his writing. As he announces at the beginning of the second section of the first notebook, he "satisf[ies], by writing, a need to let off steam [un bisogno di sfogo]

which is overpowering" (7). Gubbio's superfluity, which he must suspend or suppress in his professional capacity as a "hand that turns the handle," finds an outlet in writing, through linguistic creation. The fundamentally excessive character of the novel as discussed above thus reproduces in miniature the overflowing excess that continuously creates and shapes the human world.

The distinction between animal sufficiency and human superfluity translates into a dichotomy of immanence and transcendence: for Pirandello, as for Bataille, the animal is "in the world like water in water" (19). There can be no overflow or superfluity because the animal is seamlessly fused with its environment, without any "wunderlichen Brüche" being left over. As we saw in the previous chapter, This 'curious' indivisible remainder that is left over when man is 'divided' by the present moment translates into surplus value which gives rise to history and memory as an awareness of the passing of time, which in turn carries with it the anticipation of our finitude. Similarly, the vain torments and existential uncertainty that man suffers on account of his superfluity appear yet greater and more intolerable when reflected in the mirror of the animal's carefree innocence.

Indeed, the animal's innocence is intolerable in and of itself. "We cannot endure," Gubbio explains to the tiger, "that you, after a gory feast, should be able to sleep calmly" (60). In the wild, he continues, a man might kill a tiger in self-defence and not lose a wink, and this too is a factor of the animal's innocence, because, as Gubbio insists throughout, this is the *natural* way of things: but to pretend to be defending oneself against a ferocious tiger when in fact you have brought it there for

the sole purpose of killing it for profit and amusement, that's something else entirely.

> The beautiful, ingenuous innocence of your ferocity makes the iniquity of ours seem disgusting here. [...] A sham [*finto*] hunter, in a sham forest, among sham trees.... We shall be worthy in every respect, truly, of the concocted plot. Tigers, more tigerish than a tiger [*Tigri, più tigri d'una tigre*]. (60)

In another context, Nietzsche notes that humans are the greatest predators (*Raubthiere*) because, in order to compensate for their weakness and deficiency, they effectively 'rob' (*rauben*) the animals of their most prominent characteristics, becoming "subtler," "cleverer," more "like a human" (KSA IV: 263).[25] As ever, becoming human proceeds via the animal, by means of an indiscriminate plundering or robbing, which reciprocally transforms the animal into a metaphor and a predicate—humans have become "Tigri [metaphor], più tigri [predicate] d'una tigre," quite literally *more* like a tiger than the tiger itself.

It is fitting, then, that la Nestoroff should turn to the tiger when 'getting into character': the artificial world produced by human superfluity ultimately derives from the realization that animal being is impossible or unobtainable for humans. Thus, faced with the inaccessibility of the animal, human superfluity initiates a chain reac-

[25] There is significant disagreement among scholars concerning the question of Pirandello's familiarity with Nietzsche. Michael Rössner, the editor (and in some cases translator) of the German edition of Pirandello's complete works, is at pains to debunk what he terms the "geradezu legendenhafter Glaube an [Pirandellos] 'deutsche Bildung'" (10) entertained by Italian Pirandello scholars on account of the two years (1889–91) the author spent studying in Bonn. "Pirandello," Rössner shows, "hat Nietzsches Werk, wenn überhaupt, erst sehr spät und oberflächlich kennengelernt" (12), but, as he goes on to note, while this may rule out any direct influence on Pirandello's work, it does not by any means preclude "eine grundlegende Parallelität des Denkens," for which Rössner convincingly argues in the rest of the article.

tion, creating artifice upon artifice in an effort to reclaim what has been lost. Instead of looking into the cage, mankind now looks out at the elegant sufficiency of the animal. La Nestoroff's daily visits to the tiger thus become the vehicle for her becoming-animal, the site of a reciprocal exchange across the boundary marked by the cage. The tiger herself, in return, locked in her cage, is significantly diminished. "A captive like this, far from your savage haunts, powerless to tear anyone to pieces, or even to frighten him, what sort of tiger are you [che tigre sei tu]?" (202). The transaction whereby men have become more tiger than a tiger, has, in turn, rendered her *less* tiger than a tiger. And thus, like Borges with his shadowy series of literary tropes, for Gubbio the 'real' tiger is always 'out there' and forever out of reach.

IV. Spiders and Elephants

Besides the tiger, there is one other 'animal' that occupies a central position in the novel: Gubbio's camera, which he describes throughout as a "huge spider watching for its prey [in agguato]" atop its "knock-kneed tripod" (68). In contrast to the tiger, this "spider" is completely unnatural and indeed embodies the artificiality and mendacity of human consciousness. This "spider" may suitably be read as a literalisation of what Pirandello in his treatise on humour refers to as the "spider of experience" which weaves "the web of mentality" from the "dribble" of social life.[26] This spider

[26] Pirandello *On Humor* 135. Pirandello's treatise on *umorismo* is not so much a theory of humour or the comic *per se* as it is a document of his poetics and a meditation on the truth value of art. As a concept, *umorismo* is, above all, a way of seeing and interpreting the world that takes note of the contradictions and inconsistencies of appearances, typically relating to human pretensions and self-delusions. In limning a genealogy of *umorismo*, thus Pirandello singles out Copernicus as "one of the greatest *umoristi* without knowing it," because of the profound blow his discoveries dealt to human self-

ordinarily lives within the individual, and every web is slightly different, but with the arrival of the movie camera the limitations of such subjective experience can seemingly be overcome; the spider is externalised, as an autonomous, mechanical, objective observer, able to record reality without filtering it through a mediating consciousness. The camera, however, is simply the latest in a series of "infernal little machines [macchinette infernali]," by means of which mankind seeks to make sense of and impose order on the world, starting with logic and reason (cf. O'Rawe "Macchinetta"). Unlike a tree, which, writes Pirandello, is alive without being conscious of its existence—in Heideggarian terms, the tree is not just "weltarm" but "welt*los*"—and hence perceives no difference between itself and the world around it, man "is given at birth the sad privilege of feeling himself alive [*questo triste privilegio di sentirsi vivere*], with the fine illusion that results from it: that of taking this inner feeling, changeable and varying, as something that really exists outside of himself" (*On Humor*, 140).

It is in response to this sad privilege, which is part and parcel of the condition of superfluity, that man has devised these various infernal mechanisms of which the camera is the latest manifestation. For Gubbio, as for his friend Simone Pau (and, ultimately, Pirandello himself), both the radical objectivity of scientific endeavour and the fundamentally subjective belief in a higher power are rooted in mankind's

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satisfaction and anthropocentric thought. In this regard, Nietzsche would also have to be considered a great *umorista*—e.g. in the thoroughly non-anthropocentric, anti-humanist history of the world with which his "Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne" begins—as would Serafino Gubbio, whose ability and willingness to adopt the tiger's perspective on the moat separating her from the zoogoers exposes the hypocrisy and self-delusion at work in the structure of human society. On *L'umorismo* and its relation to Pirandello's poetics, see in particular O'Rawe *Echoes*; Druker; and Eco.

superfluity; one seeks to eliminate it altogether, whilst the other abandons itself to it completely, but both fail to reconcile the inherent contradictions of human existence. But "Life," according to Gubbio, "is not explained; it is lived [*La vita non si spiega; si vive*]."

> To set life before one as an object of study is absurd, because life, when set before one like that, inevitably loses all its real consistency and becomes an abstraction, void of meaning and value. And how after that is it possible to explain it to oneself? You have killed it. The most you can do now is to dissect it. (*Shoot!* 143)

Here, as elsewhere, Gubbio becomes little more than a mouthpiece for Pirandello's views on the irreducible opposition between "the flow of life" and the "stable and determined forms" in which we try to arrest it (*On Humor*, 137). It is this eternal flux of life which for Pirandello renders the identification of a fixed personality, or identity, impossible, both in ourselves and in others, for we do not merely construct our own identities but those of others as well, and thus we are, to coin a phrase, simultaneously *uno, nessuno, e centomila*.[27]

On a literal level, then, the *Kosmograph* tiger may be regarded as the embodiment of "the flow of life" which has been "arrested," fixed in a "stable and determined form" in the shape of a cage. Gubbio's disdain for the foolish rationalists who seek to capture life and transform it into an object of study translates directly into his

[27] Pirandello's protagonists invariably seek to circumvent this process in various ways, be it, like Signora Ponza in *Così è (se vi pare)*, by embracing the ambiguity and renouncing any claim to an autonomous, subjective identity, or adopting a fictional identity and retaining control of it through madness, like Henry IV, or else regressing to a pre-individuated, 'oceanic' Self, as Vitangelo Moscarda does. All of these characters, however, in attempting to 'opt out' of the Life/Form dichotomy, essentially cease to be alive. Mattia Pascal's living death is paradigmatic of the sort of limbo they all find themselves in, alienated from themselves, and from the world around them, stuck in a no-man's-land between life and form, and hence life and death.

mockery of the notion of placing a tiger in an enclosure in order to give the paying public an idea of "living nature." What is more, this act of bracketing off, of creating a discrete space for the animal, marked by a clear boundary separating it from the human spectators, mirrors the *internal* bracketing off of the animal within the human. Writes Gubbio,

> I see your wild nature steaming from your whole body, like the heat from glowing embers; I see marked [*segnato*] in the black stripes of your coat the elastic force of your irrepressible leaps [*slanci irrefrenabili*]. Whoever studies you closely is glad [*gode*] of the cage that imprisons you and checks in him also the savage instinct which the sight of you stirs irresistibly in his blood. (60, transl. mod.)

Here Gubbio effectively *reads* the tiger, interpreting the markings on her fur as external signs of the wildness within, which emanates from her body in all directions. The cage, moreover, serves a double function: on the one hand, it literally contains the wild beast, protecting the cast and crew of the film studio until the time comes to unleash it in front of the camera. On the other hand, it acts as a metaphor for the artificial barrier dividing nature from culture, erected as a bulwark against the savage and uncivilised instincts within man himself. That is to say, at any given moment, every man is both inside and outside the cage.

"The forms," Pirandello specifies, "in which we seek to stop, to fix in ourselves this constant flux are the concepts, the ideals with which we would like consistently to comply, all the fictions we create for ourselves, the conditions, the state in which we tend to stabilize ourselves" (*On Humor* 137). In Gubbio's terms, the stable form which we call our identity is in actual fact nothing but a "metaphor of ourselves" (*Shoot!* 123), which we seek to preserve at all costs, even if it means destroying our-

selves in the process. Gubbio yearns instead to abandon himself to his innermost being, giving up the futile pretense of maintaining the false exterior and surrendering to the infinite. These forms may have arrested the flow of life superficially, but "within ourselves,"—which, in this context, also means *inside the cage*—"in what we call the soul and is the life in us, the flux continues, indistinct under the barriers and beyond the limits we impose as a means to fashion a consciousness and a personality for ourselves" (*On Humor* 137). The condition of superfluity, which for Gubbio is the human condition *tout court*, is brought about by the inadequacy of the frames and forms we humans construct in an effort to contain the flow of life. If "animals resist metaphorization," as Lippit observes, it may be because they lack the superfluity that transforms humans into "metaphors of themselves." At the same time, however, a factor of this resistance is the way the tiger permeates the text, its influence flowing outward "under the barriers and the beyond the limits" imposed on it by the cage, until its presence is felt at every level.

Gubbio's "spider" is the antithesis of the tiger; it exists only to devour and destroy the "live reality" embodied by the tiger and transform it into the ghostly artifice of the image. For the actors, the experience of seeing their images on screen is unsettling and uncanny: reduced to a pure appearance, they suddenly are what they appear to be, namely artificial constructs. The tiger, by contrast, is always what she appears to be. It is for this reason that the tiger's encounter with the "spider" must prove fatal. As Gubbio remarks, everyone involved in the filmmaking process is intent on fooling the camera: "Scene painters, stage hands, actors all give themselves the air of deceiving the machine, which will give an appearance of reality to all their fictions"

(57). The tiger, on the other hand, does not need to fool the machine, nor could she, since, like Nietzsche's animal, which "erscheint in jedem Momente ganz und gar *als das was es ist*, kann also gar nicht anders sein als ehrlich" (KSA I: 249, emphasis added). This radical honesty and openness presents an antidote to the deadening, dehumanising influence of modern, mechanised reality on the life of the artist.

The fate of the artist in the modern world is illustrated in the novel via the figure of the violinist, whom Gubbio is introduced to by Simone Pau the day after his arrival in Rome. Like everyone associated with mechanical reproducibility in the book, he has been saddled with a "disgusting nickname" but we never discover what it is, nor do we learn his real name—he remains simply the man with the violin. This man, Pau explains, in addition to being a formidably gifted violinist, once owned a printing press in Perugia, which he ran into the ground and moved to Rome, where, on account of his drinking problem he had been forced repeatedly to pawn his most prized possession: the violin. In order to earn enough money to retrieve it, he took a job at a printing office, working for one of his former employees, feeding bricks of lead to a Monotype machine, "a pachyderm, flat, black, squat; a monstrous beast which eats lead and shits books" (19, transl. mod.). To add insult to injury, once he had made enough to retrieve his violin, he was able to find a job at a cinema that required a violin and a clarinet for its orchestra. As it soon emerged, however, this 'orchestra' in fact consisted of nothing but a player piano, which he was to accompany while the silent films played in the background. "Do you understand?" Pau asks indignantly:

> A violin, in the hands of a man, accompanies a roll of perforated paper running through the belly of this other machine! The soul, which moves and guides the hands of the man [...] obliged to follow the register of this automatic instrument! (20)

This experience so traumatised the violinist that he stopped playing altogether, abandoning himself entirely to the bottle. The perforated rolls of paper that pass through the 'bellies' of these machine-beasts stand in metaphorical relation to the perforated rolls of film on which the movie cameras store the life they have devoured, until it can be reanimated by a different machine. But before that can happen, the film needs to be developed, which takes place in the "*Art* or *Negative Department*": "Here the work of the machines is mysteriously completed [*Qua si compie misteriosamente l'opera delle macchine*]." The Negative Department becomes a "womb, in which is developing and taking shape a monstrous mechanical birth" (54). The text employs naturalistic, biological metaphors to describe every stage of mechanical reproduction. The machines are 'beasts' whose only purpose is to 'devour' and 'ingest' life, 'reproducing' it in the form of artificial offspring, stillborn and endlessly stupid. "It does everything by itself [*da sé*]," the foreman tells the violinist, referring to the elephantine Monotype machine. As soon as they invent a machine to feed it lead bricks, he will be truly superfluous. (Heaven knows what manner of books this pachyderm spews out of its anus, but judging by the description of the printing process, they don't appear to have been written by *people*, and they certainly could not ever be considered *art*.)

Ever since the incident with the pianola, the violinist has given up playing, although he carries his instrument with him everywhere he goes. One day, he arrives

on the *Kosmograph* lot, accompanied by Simone Pau who announces that his friend, in order to "break the evil spell," will "play to the tiger" (73). "Don't be afraid!" Pau shouts encouragingly as the violinist stands alone before the cage, the large crowd standing back, "Play! She will understand you!" (74). Alone with the tiger, the violinist has the opportunity to reclaim his humanity, 'speaking' the wordless musical language of authentic artistic expression, 'she will understand' him, just as the onlookers understand, able, for once, to escape from their daily lives serving the machines. The transcendent significance of this encounter between this man and the tiger is emphasised through the absence of mechanical mediation: the director, we read, is furious with himself for not having sent Gubbio off to fetch his camera in order to record the moment. Instead, it remains irreproducible—mechanically at least; Gubbio is still recording the incident, just with his pen and not his camera. "It did not last long," he writes. The violinist is carried off in triumph to the nearest bar where he proceeds to drink himself to death, and the cycle continues. The tiger, too, is forgotten. We do not discover how the violinist's performance affects her. Instead, we are left with the image of Varia Nestoroff, la donna tigre, "who had looked on at the scene, as though in an ecstasy instinct with terror [*un'estasi piena di sgomento*]" (75). This is a shift which subtly foreshadows the substitution of these two tigers in the final scene.

V. Resistance to Metaphor

On page 576 of the copy of *Tutti i romanzi*, vol. 2 in Butler Library—just after Gubbio glosses the name of the film with his remark, "La solita donna più tigre della tigre"—

someone has written in the margin: "È Serafino la vera tigre!" What are the implications of this exclamation? What would it mean for Serafino to be the "real" tiger, as opposed, presumably, not only to Nestoroff, who is "more tiger than the tiger," but also to the *actual tiger* languishing in its cage on the *Kosmograph* lot? How many tigers are there in this novel, anyway?

Gubbio's initial discussion of superfluity is prompted by an outburst from his vitriolic friend Simone Pau, a former university professor whom he had been telling about the "frail hopes" and "misadventures" that had brought him to Rome. "Excuse me," Pau interrupts, "but what do I know about the mountain, the tree, the sea? The mountain is a mountain because I say: 'That is a mountain.' In other words: '*I am the mountain*'" (10). This seemingly incongruous rejoinder presents a conception of meaning and value as at once mimetic and metaphorical. Structurally, it is analogous to the argument put forth by Nietzsche in his treatise "Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge," where he writes that finding something which you yourself have hidden in the bushes with a mind to discovering it later is no great achievement:

> Wenn ich die Definition des Säugethiers mache und dann erkläre, nach Besichtigung eines Kameels: Siehe, ein Säugethier, so wird damit eine Wahrheit zwar an das Licht gebracht, aber sie ist von begränztem Werthe, ich meine, sie ist durch und durch anthropomorphisch und enthält keinen einzigen Punct, der "wahr an sich", wirklich und allgemeingültig, abgesehen von dem Menschen, wäre. (KSA I: 883)

In other words: *I am the camel*, just as *I am the mountain*, and, by the same token, *I am the tiger*. All such statements (all statements in general, ultimately) are by definition made within the "social world," which, as Gubbio repeatedly emphasises "by its very nature is no longer the natural world. It is a constructed world" (101). In

his poem, Borges imagines his tiger, "powerful, innocent, bloodstained, and newmade," prowling through the jungle and leaving "its footprint on the muddy edge | of a river with a name unknown to it | (in its world, there are no names, nor past, nor future, | only the sureness of the present moment)." This tiger, too, exists outside history and 'goes into' the moment without any 'curious fractions' being left over, fractions like names or dates or times. Borges tries to isolate this moment, specifying that he means *this* tiger—"the real one"—that casts its shadow on the plain "today, the third of August, '59," but this *now* is of a different denomination than the tiger's, and the poet must recognise that "the act of naming it, of guessing | what is its nature and its circumstance | creates a fiction, not a living creature [*Lo hace ficción del arte y no criatura | Viviente*]" (Borges 116–19).

A central tension in Pirandello's treatment of the tiger (and his natural imagery) is the insistence on its being authentic, 'real', genuine, etc. as opposed to the fictional, fake, constructed and fragile nature of human identity and reality. But the 'reality' of the natural is also constantly undermined, 'humoristically' in that it already contains its opposite. These too are merely metaphors we live by. The tension, then, is that Pirandello seems to yearn for this authenticity even as he unmasks it as illusory, constructed, and fake. The tiger, in other words, *is* on the one hand the real tiger, the epitome of tigerishness, raw, uncultivated, untameable, and so forth. But this too is a construct, an illusion, a form of "rhetoric" which Gubbio-Pirandello so disparages, but which comes up again and again with reference to animals and their relationship to (or rather, their place within) human reality.

As a result, the tiger—just as la Nestoroff, the violinist, and Gubbio himself—is an allegorical figure in the novel. It stands for not only all tigers ever, but more importantly the battery of associations and significances that the figure of the tiger has amassed over the centuries. In the same way as Varia Nestoroff occupies the position of the inevitable diva, the exotic and seductive 'man-eater', the "usual lady more tiger than the tiger." And Gubbio comes to embody the downtrodden, disenfranchised, dehumanised, alienated labourer ("io non opero nulla"), the victim of the rationalistic mechanisation of the modern world. It is in this sense that the anonymous annotator's comment must be read: the tiger's fate is sealed by the advance of technology and capitalism, and so, in a way, is Gubbio's. Indeed, the annotation continues: "È Simone Pau, è il violinista ... è tutti coloro che sono stati vinti, risucchiati dalla macchina" [He's Simone Pau, he's the violinist ... he's everyone who has been defeated, sucked in by the machine/camera]. Thus Gubbio may become the 'real' tiger insofar as we regard the real tiger to be the metaphorico-allegorical one.

But there is another tiger in the text. In addition to the symbolic tiger, freighted with multiple metaphorical associations, Gubbio again and again insists on the singularity of *this* tiger, *here* in *this* cage, *right now*. This is underlined by the way the tiger is introduced into the novel through a series of digressions: thus, following another tirade against the stupidity and falsity of the movie industry, Gubbio begins the next section, "Excuse me a moment. I am going to pay a visit to the tiger" (57).[28]

[28] Maria Antonietta Grignani notes how Pirandello values digression as "a perpetual flight from the linearity of the story" and as "a subversive strategy [aimed] at pillorying classical rhetoric through the implementation of a counterrhetoric conceived as the art of unmasking and persuasion." She goes on to argue that "Serafino opens illusory spaces between text and extratext" by means of such digressions

Gubbio assures us that he will continue his story afterwards, but that right now he "must go and see the tiger." The implication is that the tiger is not part of the story, and yet she exerts an imperative force which disrupts the flow of the narrative. Gubbio *must* go and see the tiger. This interruption also carries with it a shift to the present tense, as if the animal's 'eternal present' were suddenly mirrored in Gubbio's narration. At a certain level, then, the tiger is presented as unassimilable to the surrounding narrative, even though she is quite literally the centrepiece of that narrative. At the same time, the emphatic insistence on the haecceity of *this* tiger is in itself an act of framing, without which an encounter with it would be impossible.

"No animal has ever *spoken to me* like this tiger," (57, transl. mod.) says Gubbio, by way of explaining why he goes every day to stand in front of her cage. Although this encounter repeats itself daily, it nevertheless assumes the character of an interruption, a caesura. In some ways, it is reminiscent of the arresting encounter Jacques Derrida describes having with his cat in the bathroom, which likewise "is repeated every morning" (*Animal*, 13) but nevertheless stands out as a singular event. "I must immediately make it clear," he writes, interrupting himself with some urgency,

> the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, *a little cat*. It isn't the *figure* of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the bedroom as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse our myths and religions, literature and fables. (6)

But of course, as Derrida well knows, he is protesting too much. Such is the metaphorical force of the animal in language that it is all but impossible to dissociate *this*

("Making and Unmaking" 81). On the use of digression in Pirandello's works more generally, see Santovetti 101–31.

cat from "Montaigne's cat" (6), or "Baudelaire's family of cats, or Rilke's, or Buber's" (7) and so on. All the insistent deictic specificity he can muster is not enough to isolate *this* cat from all the others. Or, perhaps rather, the deixis is always both endophoric (this cat right here) and exophoric (referring to 'other' cats, outside the text). That is to say, this little cat is always, at one and the same time, one, specific, *real* cat, *and* an "ambassador" of "the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race." Derrida insists on this being a real cat "in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity." Caught in the gaze of this animal, he recognises in it, prior to any identification in terms of species or gender, a specific "irreplaceable living being." "Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized [*rebelle à tout concept*]" (9).

This 'rebellion'—or, alternatively, this 'resistance to metaphor'—is inherent in Derrida's coinage of the neologism *animot*, a chimerical portmanteau of animals (*animaux*) and the word (*mot*), which, when spoken aloud, appears to violate the rules of French grammar, an uneasy singular/plural hybrid which Derrida employs in order to trouble the traditionally self-evident capacity of language to d(en)ominate the living other. It performs the 'fictionalisation' that the act of naming effects, even as it leaves open a space which may be inhabited by the animal thus named without its having to conform to the strictures of human linguistic practice. This space, which we might imagine as existing somewhere between the two constituent parts of the word *animot*, means that this word designates three things at once: 1) the specific animal named, 2) the multiplicity of other animals contained in that denomination, and 3) the unnamed, unnameable *real* living being that resists conceptualisation and

metaphorisation. Each in their own way, Derrida, Borges, and Pirandello are all driven to pursue that 'ancient, foolish, and vague' quest for this third, elusive cat.[29]

VI. Inside the Cage

"Girare, ho girato." This inflection of the verb to turn, which opens the final chapter of the notebooks, also marks a shift in narrative perspective. Up until now, Gubbio has always related things more or less as they happen, chronicling, as in a diary, the events of a particular day or part thereof. Here, instead, a month has passed since "the appalling disaster" [fatto atrocissimo], and Gubbio declares that he has now attained perfection in his role as a cameraman: "As an operator I am now, truly, perfect." In practice, this means that he has lost the power of speech, and, as his final notebook draws to a close, he abandons his writing.[30] From now on his hand will only turn the handle and nothing more. If superfluity is language, it stands to reason that in abandoning superfluity, he also abandons linguistic expression. The problem with superfluity and the ideal of animal transcendence is that we cannot simply abandon our language and hope to become like the animals; the most we can hope for is to become like the machines we have created.

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[29] In his famous poem "The Naming of Cats," from *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939), T.S. Eliot notes that a cat "must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES": one for everyday use, one "that's peculiar, and more dignified," like "Munustrap, Quaxo, or Coricopat," which never belongs to more than one cat. "But above and beyond there's still one name left over, | And that is the name that you never will guess; | The name that no human research can discover— | But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess" (Eliot 149).

[30] Several critics have suggested (e.g. Angelini 20) that Gubbio begins writing his diary only after the final scene, but this cannot be the case, since he often comments on things that have just happened or are just about to happen, such as the imminent arrival of Aldo Nuti (*Shoot!* 48).

The perfect tense of "ho girato" also marks a shift especially from the way in which the tiger was always written about, namely in the present tense. Now that she has fulfilled her function and been slaughtered in the name of entertainment, that present moment has receded into the past, even though, as Gubbio notes, the "appalling disaster" is "still being discussed everywhere." More specifically, the tiger's 'eternal present' has been replaced by the eternal present of mechanical reproducibility: her life has been sucked in by the 'spider' and now leads a ghostly existence on the cinema screen, reanimated again and again for the benefit of the paying public. But before all that can happen, we must first return to the climactic scene where Nuti, the aggrieved actor, and Gubbio, the observer-narrator, both enter the cage, waiting, in the sham forest, for the arrival of the tiger. Inside that cage, man and animal will finally meet on equal ground, and the stable boundary between inside and outside, reality and artifice, nature and culture, of which the cage has been the constant guarantor, will be rendered temporarily inoperative.

While Gubbio is setting up his camera, he notices Nuti go to the edge of the cage and thrust apart a section of the foliage serving as a backdrop before returning to his designated spot, but Gubbio thinks nothing of it. The door linking the two cages is opened and the tiger appears; Gubbio begins filming, and narrates:

> I saw Nuti take his aim from the beast and slowly turn the muzzle of his rifle towards the spot where a moment earlier he had opened a loophole among the boughs, and fire, and the tiger immediately spring upon him and become merged with him [*con lui mescolarsi*], before my eyes, in a horrible writhing mass. Drowning the most deafening shouts that came from all the actors outside the cage as they ran instinctively towards la Nestoroff who had fallen at the shot, [...] I heard there in the cage the deep growl of

> the beast and the horrible gasp of the man as he lay helpless in its fangs, in its claws, which were tearing his throat and chest[.] (212, transl. mod.)

There are several things all happening at once here, but one way of describing them would be as a curious instance of "de-metaphorisation" or of a conflation of the literal and the figurative.[31] Instead of shooting the 'actual' tiger, Nuti shoots the metaphorical tiger, la Nestoroff, who, moreover, is standing outside the cage, and hence outside the diegesis of the scene. The plot of the novel becomes enmeshed in the plot of the film: the two narrative levels collapse into one just as the two tigers, on and off camera, are symbolically and literally fused. At the same time, Nuti, whose nerves of steel and steady aim had singled him out as the ideal representative of rational thought and superior firepower is caught up in his own becoming-animal, as he is described as "becom[ing] merged with" the tiger: man and beast united in a "horrible writhing mass," each issuing inarticulate sounds until the one is indistinguishable from the other.

This undermining of identity and species boundaries would thus seem to have rendered inoperative the symbolic order. But Gubbio continues: "I heard, I heard, I kept on hearing above that growl, above that gasp, the continuous ticking of the machine, the handle of which my hand, alone, of its own accord,[32] still kept on

[31] Gavriel Moses refers to this process as "unmetaphoring," a phrase he borrows from Rosalie L. Colie, and which he places in opposition to Genette's notion of "secondarization": "The process of 'unmetaphoring' is an artistic strategy very apt in overcoming the 'secondarization' which occurs with figures once they become part of the traditional, expected repertory of literary discourse. [...] Unmetaphoring, it seems to me, manages to recreate the shock inherent in the actual creation of the figures (that unique moment when the figure had not yet become part of a convention) by reversing the process." (Moses 10n11).

[32] "...la macchinetta, di cui la mia mano, sola, *da sé*, ancora, seguitava a girare la manovella" (*Romanzi*, 2:733, emphasis added). Note the parallel to Gubbio's prognosis of the machines one day going of

turning" (212). The sound of the camera drowns out the noise of the commotion outside the cage as well as the carnage inside it. This is the sound of the symbolic order re-establishing itself, after this interruption. It is the sound, to borrow Mary Ann Doane's terminology, of the contingent being transformed into an event. "Death and the contingent have something in common," writes Doane, "insofar as both are often situated as that which is unassimilable to meaning. Death would seem to mark the insistence and intractability of the real in representation" (145).[33] The planned death of the *Kosmograph* tiger was supposed to supply a *frisson* of dangerous authenticity to an otherwise contrived fiction. Unleashed, however, upon the field of representation, in the final scene, the tiger precipitates an explosion of contingency, which, as we have seen, disrupts the flow of the narrative, if only for a moment.

But Gubbio's hand goes on turning the handle, and by doing so, the contingent is transformed into an event, i.e. something delimited (of a specific duration), and which has a particular significance. Recall Gubbio's definition of "superfluity" as that which "creates in nature an artificial world, a world that has a meaning and value for [man] alone." The terrible, not to say fearful, force of the contingent may thus be framed and exhibited for profit. Which is precisely what happens with this scene, for, as Gubbio informs us, the film goes on to become a box-office hit, "what with the enormous publicity and the morbid curiosity which the sordid atrocity of the drama

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their own accord (*da sé*), rendering him superfluous.

[33] Doane is referring here to Thomas Edison's notorious "actuality" *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903) in which Topsy, a celebrated former circus elephant was executed at Coney Island for having killed three of her trainers in as many years. Her fate is thus analogous to the *Kosmograph* tiger's, but it was by no means uncommon at the time to shoot or kill exotic animals on camera at the time (see note 6 above).

of that slaughtered couple would everywhere arouse." The death of the couple (Nuti and Nestoroff) is now the main attraction. There is no mention of the tiger; her death has been eclipsed by that of the two lovers. But this too might be read in terms of the transfer which occurred during that fatal scene, where the tiger became merged first (metaphorically) with Nestoroff and then (literally) with Nuti. This process also mirrors the transition of the animal into language: the "event" of language excludes the animal, indeed it depends on that exclusion for its existence. Language is the residual trace of that vanished animality.

> Hier gilt auch nicht daß man in seinem Haus ist, vielmehr ist man in ihrem Haus.
>
> —Kafka, "Der Bau"

Chapter 4

The Enemy Within

Kafka's Zoopoetics

I. Musophobia

In the summer of 1917, Franz Kafka suffered a haemorrhage and was subsequently diagnosed with tuberculosis. A month later, on 12 September, he went to stay with his sister Ottla in the village of Zürau, where, he would remain until the spring of the following year, convalescing. As his diaries and letters attest, he had some of the most intensive encounters with animals in his life. "Mir geht es recht gut zwischen allen den Tieren" (KKAB3 339), he wrote to Max and Elsa Brod in early October, in a letter describing his careful observation of one of his sister's pigs, and his practice of feeding the goats in the garden. Perhaps the most complex and intimate relationship of this period was with his sister's cat, which assumed a particularly prominent position in Kafka's everyday life on account of a third category of animal: hordes of mice which kept him up at night with their incessant scurrying, gnawing, and burrowing—"man hört Kralle für Kralle."[1] The sensation of being surrounded by this "schreckliches stummes lärmendes Volk [...] dem die Nacht gehört,"[2] working away secretly in his room, filled him with terror. As he explained to Max Brod:

[1] Letter to Max Brod, 24 Nov. 1917 (KKAB3 367).

[2] Letter to Felix Weltsch, 15 Nov. 1917 (365).

> Das was ich gegenüber den Mäusen habe, ist platte Angst. Auszuforschen woher sie kommt, ist Sache der Psychoanalytiker, ich bin es nicht. Gewiß hängt sie wie auch die Ungezieferangst mit dem unerwarteten, ungebetenen, unvermeidbaren, gewissermaßen stummen, verbissenen, geheimabsichtlichen Erscheinen dieser Tiere zusammen, mit dem Gefühl, daß sie die Mauern ringsherum hundertfach durchgraben haben und dort lauern, daß sie sowohl durch die ihnen gehörige Nachtzeit als auch durch ihre Winzigkeit so fern uns und damit noch weniger angreifbar sind.[3]

Kafka describes how his hearing became infinitely more sensitive, to the point where he was hearing these industrious mice everywhere, and how he sat up in bed attempting, unsuccessfully to peer with "Katzenaugen in das Mäusedunkel hinein."[4] He eventually came to an understanding with the cat and was able to leave the business of watching out for the mice to it, but Kafka never truly got over his fear of these creatures, his attempts at "toughening himself up"[5] by observing the field mice in the surrounding countryside during the day notwithstanding.

This experience immediately brings to mind two of Kafka's late stories, namely "Josephine, die Sängerin oder das Volk der Mäuse" and "Der Bau," both written roughly six years later in the winter of 1923/24, shortly before Kafka's death on 3 June of that year. Certain passages in "Der Bau" in particular resonate strongly with the feeling of defencelessness that accompanied Kafka's musophobia on account of the creatures' small size. Having worked tirelessly at constructing and patrolling his

[3] Letter to Max Brod, 3 Dec. 1917 (373).

[4] Letter to Max Brod 10 Dec. 1917 (378).

[5] "Mäuse vertreibe ich mit der Katze, aber womit soll ich die Katze vertreiben? Du glaubst, Du habest nichts gegen Mäuse? Natürlich, Du hast auch gegen Menschenfresser nichts, aber wenn sie in der Nacht unter allen Kästen hervorkriechen und die Zähne fletschen werden, wirst Du sie bestimmt nicht mehr leiden können. Übrigens suche auch ich mich jetzt auf Spaziergängen durch Betrachtung der Feldmäuse abzuhärten, sie sind ja nicht übel, aber das Zimmer ist kein Feld und der Schlaf kein Spaziergang." Letter to Felix Weltsch, ca. 30 Nov. 1917 (372).

burrow, the animal narrator of "Der Bau" relates how he fell asleep, but was awakened by "ein an sich kaum hörbares Zischen" (KKANII 606) produced, he surmises, by a "kleine[s] Volk" (608), who spoil the integrity of the narrator's burrow by digging tunnels of their own. "Was für ein unaufhörlich tätiges Volk das ist und wie lästig sein Fleiß" (606). And yet these industrious creatures are a mere nuisance compared to the enemies lurking "im Innern der Erde":

> ich habe sie noch nie gesehn, aber die Sagen erzählen von ihnen und ich glaube fest an sie. Es sind Wesen der innern Erde, nicht einmal die Sage kann sie beschreiben, selbst wer ihr Opfer geworden ist hat sie kaum gesehn, sie kommen, man hört das Kratzen ihrer Krallen knapp unter sich in der Erde, die ihr Element ist, und schon ist man verloren. Hier gilt auch nicht daß man in seinem Haus ist, vielmehr ist man in ihrem Haus. (578)

The narrator's sense of powerlessness and vulnerability is thus compounded by a gnawing suspicion that he is not truly at home in his burrow, but indeed rather intruding on another creature's territory. The dichotomy between inside and outside which the narrator has worked so hard to maintain is thus undermined from within by indigenous creatures that render the narrator himself an outsider in this burrow which he has "durch Kratzen und Beißen, Stampfen und Stoßen dem widerspenstigen Boden abgewonnen" and which, he insists, is therefore his alone and could never belong to anyone else. It is practically an extension of his own body: "meine Burg die auf keine Weise jemandem andern angehören kann und die so sehr mein ist, daß ich hier letzten Endes ruhig von meinem Feind auch die tödliche Verwundung annehmen kann, denn mein Blut versickert hier in meinem Boden und geht nicht verloren" (601). The ultimate threat posed by these mythical inner adversaries is thus

the possibility of dispossession, or worse: the realisation that one's home—one's own *body*—was never truly one's own to begin with.

In an essay written to mark the tenth anniversary of Kafka's death, Walter Benjamin observed that a key component of Kafka's poetics is the excavation of that which has been forgotten, and that this operation is inextricably linked to the figure of the animal, which are "Behältnisse des Vergessenen." "So kann man verstehen," he writes, "daß Kafka nicht müde wurde, den Tieren das Vergessene abzulauschen. Sie sind wohl nicht das Ziel; aber ohne sie geht es nicht" ("Kafka," 430). It is hard to imagine a more succinct definition of zoopoetics than that: the animal serves as a necessary and unsubstitutible means to particular poetic ends. At the same time, an unavoidable effect of this excavation or auscultation is the re-animalisation of language. The Western logocentric tradition has consistently sought to *dis*embody language, to transcend the physical, animal part of the human.[6] Thus, one's own, animal body is the "most forgotten Other" ("die vergessenste Fremde," 431) of language. It is for this same reason, writes Benjamin, that "Kafka den Husten, der aus seinem Innern brach, 'das Tier' genannt hat" (431).

"Der Bau" can be read both as a representation of the human body and as a textual body, as an allegory of writing.[7] These two readings are by no means mutually

[6] See also Adriana Cavarero's discussion of the logocentric tradition, which she reads as a history of the deliberate "devocalisation" of λόγος (33–41), whereby the voice (φωνή) came to be seen as nothing but a container for meaning, and not an instrument of expression in its own right. This is because while articulate speech (λόγος) defines man and sets him it apart from the other animals, the voice is not exclusive to humans. The voice thus always 'speaks' the body along with the λόγος, yoking it to the very animality that it tries to suppress (or, in Benjamin's terms, to forget). On the figure of the animal voice in Kafka's "Die Verwandlung," see Driscoll "Tierstimme."

[7] Thus, Heinz Politzer writes: "In an almost allegorical way 'The Burrow' is identical with Kafka's own

exclusive: the physicality of language is central to Kafka's conception of writing and his own relationship to his texts.[8] In the former interpretation, the "kaum hörbares Zischen" that destroys the animal narrator's peace of mind is read as a textual echo of the sounds emanating from Kafka's tubercular lungs.[9] In the latter reading, the constant emphasis on the narrator's hands (as well as his head) as the tools used to construct this labyrinthine network of tunnels refers metaphorically to the author's hand constructing his text on the page.[10] And certainly, the text itself invites just such a reading—the burrow started out as "ein kleines tolles Zickzackwerk von Gängen" which the animal narrator began to construct "halb spielerisch an diesem Eckchen" (586), just like the first few strokes of the pen in the top left-hand corner of the page,

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work" (319). Similarly, Stanley Corngold asserts that "it is an allegorical burrow of writing" (*Necessity*, 283). Gerhard Kurz provides a more exhaustive list of such interpretations of the text in his article "Das Rauschen der Stille" (156n7).

[8] Kafka's oft-quoted declarations that "[Ich] bestehe aus Literatur" and "Der Roman bin ich, meine Geschichten sind ich" (KKAB2 15), for example, testify to his frequent desire to "merge with his writing" (Anderson *Kafka's Clothes*, 35). An early indication that this transformation into language—what Walter Sokel described as "inlogozation" (74)—is conceived in animalistic terms, may be found in a diary entry from late August, 1911, in which Kafka writes "Ich lebe nur hie und da in einem kleinen Wort, in dessen Umlaut (oben 'stößt' [the word appears at the end of the previous entry]) ich z.B. auf einen Augenblick meinen unnützen Kopf verliere. Erster und letzter Buchstabe sind Anfang und Ende meines fischartigen Gefühls" (KKAT 38).

[9] See, for example, Britta Maché: "If this mysterious noise heard in various parts of the burrow indeed represents the hissing sound accompanying the breathing of a person afflicted with tuberculosis of the larynx, then the burrow itself, the place in which this noise is being heard, must logically be seen as Kafka's physique, including his pulmonary tract with lungs, various passageways and the air entrance-exit of the mouth" (526–27). More recently, Tyler Whitney has productively read "Der Bau" in the context of contemporary scientific studies of subjective sound and practices of auto-auscultation, reading the burrow not as a manifestation of the patient's lungs but rather of the inner ear (141–96).

[10] Bettine Menke writes: "Das im Text verschwiegene, metaleptisch ausgesparte *graphein* stiftete den literalen Zusammenhang des Baus und des Textes, das heißt auch zwischen dem, *was* oder *worüber* das Tier erzählt, und dem, *wie* das Tier erzählt oder dem Erzählen selbst. Das Schreiben–Graben gibt also vor, daß Bestimmungen des Baus quasi-allegorisch als solche für den Text-*Bau* gelesen werden können" (Menke 32).

nearest the "surface." Moreover, the burrow is presented as the narrator's life's work—the narrator regards these first few scribbles fondly as his "Erstlingswerk" (587)—which, in the context of the "*Bau* = Text" analogy, suggests that the text is not merely staging the process of its own production, but rather reflecting on Kafka's entire *œuvre*. And it is this *œuvre*, flawed though it may be, which the narrator seeks to protect from an outside threat. But what of the "enemy within," who inhabits this subterranean structure and may in fact be its true owner? What is this animal that lives down there and threatens to undo everything the narrator has worked so hard to create? More importantly, if the burrow represents Kafka's entire *œuvre*, has this animal been there all along?

With these questions in mind, I would like to turn to an earlier text, which is also in many ways uncannily reminiscent of Kafka's "Mäusenacht" in Zürau—I say "uncannily" because it was written in 1914, fully three years before that experience. The story is told by an unnamed narrator who, seeking solitude, has taken a job as a railway station agent near Kalda, a remote town somewhere in the middle of the Russian Steppes. Following a series of abortive attempts at making himself self-sufficient in preparation for the coming winter, hampered equally by the barren environment and the local population, with whom he has a more or less overtly antagonistic relationship, the narrator reveals that the area is inhabited by a horde of enormous burrowing rats which threaten to undermine the foundations of his lonely hut by the railway line by relentlessly clawing away at the walls at night. Finally, he develops an uncontrollable and debilitating cough, which the other railway workers refer to as "Wolfshusten," apparently as a direct result of prolonged exposure to this inhospita-

ble environment. This condition is accompanied by a wild howling sound, the outward manifestation of the narrator's becoming-animal, which is intolerable to his ears, and which forces him to abandon his efforts at securing his hut from the burrowing attacks of the giant rats. The story breaks off just as the narrator decides to return to civilization to seek medical assistance.

This "Russian story," otherwise known as "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn," was written between mid-August and late November 1914, after Kafka and Felice Bauer had broken off their engagement for the first time—another eerie parallel to Kafka's sojourn in Zürau, which marked the definitive end to that relationship. The fragment does not appear in most collections of Kafka's short prose, but rather merely in his diaries, and has been largely ignored by Kafka scholarship.[11] The few studies to deal with the text have generally read it in direct relation to elements of Kafka's biography and especially as a means of shedding light on the larger project of *Der Proceß*, which Kafka was writing at the same time.[12] Although the narrator's battle

[11] "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn"—the title is Kafka's own (KKAT 715)—first appeared in print in 1951 with the publication of Max Brod's edition of Kafka's diaries. The critical edition follows Max Brod's lead on this point by reproducing the text only in the *Tagebücher* volume (549–53, 684–94). The Fischer Taschenbuch edition of Kafka's *Erzählungen*, edited by Roger Hermes, likewise does not contain the story, and the same is true of the Muir translation of Kafka's *Complete Stories*. The only English translation is thus to be found in volume two of Kafka's *Diaries* edited by Brod and translated by Martin Greenberg and Hannah Arendt. It is not clear why Brod opted not to publish the relatively long "Kaldabahn" fragment separately, but it is conceivable he suppressed it because of the overtly homoerotic description of the relationship between the narrator and the inspector who visits him every month. On Brod's heteronormative "censorship" of Kafka's texts see Anderson "Homosexualität."

[12] Peter-André Alt and Reiner Stach both mention the text briefly in their recent biographies of Kafka, the latter in reference to the fragmentary nature of the majority of Kafka's writings (Stach 44, 496), the former in the context of Kafka's uncle Josef Löwy, who was involved in the construction of a railway in the Belgian Congo for nearly twelve years, and whose exploits are commonly held to have at least partly inspired the "Kaldabahn" story (Alt 28; cf. Northey 15–30). Hartmut Binder reads the narrator's decision to isolate himself in the depths of Russia in terms of Kafka's break-up with Felice

with the local rat population has been mentioned in passing by several scholars, with very few exceptions, no one has yet addressed the story's significance as a document of Kafka's zoopoetics.[13] In what follows, I aim to delve deeper into this enigmatic and little-read text in order to explore the ways in which the animal presence in this story may elucidate certain aspects of the relationship between animals and writing in Kafka's works as a whole. Specifically, I will trace a trajectory from "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn" to "Der Bau," exploring the ways in which the earlier text prefigures later forms of animality in Kafka's zoopoetics. I will focus primarily on two key aspects, the first being what I refer to as the "animality of the text" itself, and the second being the problem of inhabiting or embodying the text *as* an animal.

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(173), a view shared by Michael Müller, who furthermore posits a link to the final days of Leo Tolstoy, which had been prominently reported in the press four years previously (75–6). Müller's is one of only two scholarly articles devoted explicitly to the "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn." The other is by Bernd Neumann, who quite rightly takes issue with the preponderance of biographical readings of the story, but his subsequent attempt to interpret the Russian setting as an explicit reference to contemporary anxieties surrounding the fate of the region's Jews in the wake of the outbreak of the First World War is spurious and far-fetched, and his insistence that "Kaldabahn" forms part of a trilogy of Russian stories (42)—the other two being *Der Proceß* and "In der Strafkolonie"—is plainly wrong and most likely based on a misreading of Kafka's diary entry of 21 August 1914, in which Kafka complains of being "von allen drei Geschichten zurückgeworfen" before concluding that "Vielleicht ist es richtig, daß die russische Geschichte nur immer nach dem Proceß gearbeitet werden durfte" (KKAT 675)—a reference to "Kaldabahn," certainly, but indisputably singular, and there is no apparent reason why *Der Proceß* (let alone "In der Strafkolonie") should be considered a "Russian" story.

[13] Neither Müller nor Neumann pays more than the most cursory attention to the role of animality in the text. Karl-Heinz Fingerhut does devote several pages (69–74) to the story in his encyclopaedic survey of animals in Kafka's works, but his approach is largely thematic, and his reading is problematic in places (see fn 33 below, for example). A number of other scholars mention the text in passing, in particular the episode with the rats, e.g. Elias Canetti (99), Cornelia Ortlieb (353–54), and Jacques Berchtold (62–8), who considers the text in his survey of the fear of rats in literature and film. In her "kleine Zoopoetik der Moderne" (204–5), Isolde Schiffermüller briefly constrasts the scene in which the narrator kills one of the rats to the image of the dying flies in Robert Musil's "Fliegenpaper" (204–5; cf. Pachet 71–2).

Beyond the "uncanny" parallels between the text and Kafka's experiences in Zürau—the rustic exile, the sense of being under siege by burrowing rodents, the debilitating lung condition, etc.—"Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn" also contains such a profusion of typically "Kafkaesque" *topoi* that it reads almost like an inventory of Kafka's literary universe: the protagonist's social alienation and his ambiguous relationship to his superior; the absurdly futile enterprise of manning a train station on a railway line that leads nowhere; the seemingly decrepit old farmer whose powerful arms could have crushed a full-grown man; the almost total lack of privacy; the constant threat of physical violence; the list goes on. In fact, "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn" is so thoroughly Kafkaesque thematically and linguistically (not to mention formally; its fragmentary nature only adds to the effect) that one is tempted to regard it almost as self-parody.[14] I would like to propose that the animal presence in the text constitutes one of its most Kafkaesque features, specifically in the way it relates to the materiality of the text and the process of writing itself.

[14] I am of course aware that it must appear almost comically redundant to insist that something written by Kafka is "Kafkaesque." Nevertheless, since the term Kafkaesque generally refers only to certain themes, situations or impressions that are deemed particularly characteristic of the "Kafka universe," it seems reasonable to assume that even within the corpus of works produced by Franz Kafka, some will exhibit more Kafkaesque elements than others. In "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn," it seems to me, there is an unusually high frequency of such elements, which can lead to the impression that Kafka is simply "having us on" here and writing in a deliberately Kafkaesque way. Although the text is undeniably self-ironic in places, in truth it is more likely that the story was a sort of testing ground for many of the elements we have since come to associate with Kafka's literary universe and which he worked out more fully in his later texts and in the novels.

II. The Animality of the Text

As Cornelia Ortlieb observes, Kafka's texts are "von Tieren nicht nur gelegentlich belebt, sondern außerordentlich dicht besiedelt" (339). They are literally crawling with animals. Indeed, perhaps more so than that of any other author of this period, Kafka's entire *œuvre* is marked by a sustained engagement with animality. The animal presence in Kafka's texts assumes many different forms and fulfils a variety of different functions.[15] In some cases, particularly in late stories such as "Der Bau," "Forschungen eines Hundes," and "Josephine, die Sängerin oder das Volk der Mäuse," the narrative voice is itself that of an animal speaking in the first person. Other texts, such as "Der Dorfschullehrer" (1914), "Ein junger ehrgeiziger Student" (1915), or "Das Synagogentier" (1922?), revolve around strange or exceptional animals that have attained a certain degree of fame or notoriety—a giant mole-like creature in a remote village; Karl Krall's world famous Elberfeld horses that were reputed to be able to perform astounding feats of arithmetic; a strange greenish marten-like animal that inhabits a dilapidated synagogue. Still others, most notably *Die Verwandlung* (1912) and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" (1917), describe a transformation from human to animal or vice-versa (or more precisely the aftermath of such a transformation). In most cases, as in the "Kaldabahn" text, "Der Bau," and *Die Verwandlung*, the animal presence marks a disruption of the prevailing order, an uncanny intrusion of alterity that is at once unsettling and insurmountable, threatening to upend not just the pro-

[15] For a preliminary typology, see Seyppel 71–76.

tagonists' lives but also the narrative itself. It is this disruptive form of animality that I will be exploring in this chapter.[16]

In the terms elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their influential 1975 study on Kafka, animality serves primarily to *deterritorialise* established discourses and power structures by transgressing or eradicating seemingly strictly defined boundaries and opening up new possibilities for dehierarchised sets of dynamic relations constantly interacting through contagions, allegiances, and becomings. If "becoming-animal" plays a prominent role in Kafka's work, it is, they argue, because such becoming constitutes a "way out" or a "line of flight" out of the Oedipal family structure of domination and frustrated desire that Kafka is known for, and into which the biographical and psychoanalytic readings that dominated Kafka scholarship in the nineteen-fifties and sixties tended to want to reinscribe him.[17] Critics of Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out the inherent paradox of choosing becoming-animal as an emblem of deterritorialisation when in reality animals tend to be highly territorial (cf. Baudrillard 139). Clearly, they are not talking about really ex-

[16] I will not be considering the majority of the animal-narrator texts ("Josefine," "Forschungen eines Hundes," etc.) because in theses texts the animal presence does not strictly speaking constitute a threat to the established order of the narrative. One might of course argue that a non-human narrative perspective is always *inherently* alienating because of its capacity to undermine or negate dominant humanist assumptions about language and agency, but this lies beyond the scope of the present chapter.

[17] To cite just one particularly illustrative example: in a 1966 essay, Carol B. Bedwell draws a series of strict parallels between the short prose piece "Ein altes Blatt," (1917, published 1919), and Kafka's famous letter to his father (written, but never sent, in 1919, published posthumously in 1952), transforming the former into little more than an encrypted version of the latter, before concluding that "this brief sketch represents an intensely personal outcry born of painful experience. The close parallels with the Letter make it clear enough that we need seek no other interpretation" (47–48). Certainly, when faced with such statements, it becomes easier to see why Deleuze and Guattari are at such pains to insist that their readings of Kafka are *not* interpretations at all (cf. *Kafka,* 4, 7, 46, etc.).

isting animals, any more than Bataille is when he casts animality as a state of radically undifferentiated immanence. 'Animality' and 'animal' here name the very process of deterritorialisation itself, where the figure of the animal poses a threat to established orders and boundaries precisely because those orders and boundaries are conceived as anthropo- and logocentric.

The problem with Deleuze and Guattari's reading lies not so much in this narrow definition of animality; it is that for them becoming-animal *always* serves as an escape route out of this Oedipal reality, and, crucially, that the "lines of flight" that such becomings open up appear to exist primarily for Franz Kafka *himself*, not the characters in his narratives, except insofar as they are read as thinly-veiled stand-ins for their author. And since *all* instances of animality serve as vehicles for such deterritorialising, anti-Oedipal becomings, one animal is generally as good as any other. That is to say, despite Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on the importance of multiplicities and assemblages, their definition of becoming-animal makes it very difficult to account for or even acknowledge *different* types of animality within a text.[18] As we will see, Kafka often aspires to a certain kind of becoming-animal, conceived as a symbiosis of writer and text, and this is a cornerstone of his zoopoetics. But there are other kinds of animal becomings which are highly involuntary and threatening. Whereas the former is primarily associated with horses and practices of animal training, the latter revolve around untameable, intractable animals, rats and mice and other *Ungeziefer*. Both involve a form of deterritorialisation, to be sure, but they have

[18] Compare Rainer Nägele's observation that "in Kafkas Tieren eine konstitutive Beziehung zu einem Andern sich ab[zeichnet], aber auch in jeder Tierart anders und besonders" ("Kafkaesk," 38).

quite different valences within Kafka's poetics—or rather, Kafka's zoopoetics is informed by the very tension between these two forms of animality in and of the text. The question of the animal penetrates to the very core of Kafka's literary production. As noted above, his texts are inhabited by a vast array of animals, many of which appear to be far more "at home" there than the protagonists, who feel perennially isolated and excluded from their surroundings, forever waiting to be allowed in, or under threat of being kicked out. But there is also a sense in which the text *itself* and the language in which it is written has become animal, and it is this, I would argue, that makes Kafka's poetics a poetics of animality.

Animetaphor

It is striking how many of the animals in Kafka's texts resist precise description. When certain scholars flatly refer to the narrator of "Der Bau" as a "badger," for instance, or attempt definitively to determine the species of "Ungeziefer" into which Gregor Samsa is transformed,[19] they fail to acknowledge the fundamental indeterminacy of these animals, which is quite deliberate, as underlined by Kafka's express prohibition against depicting the creature on the cover of *Die Verwandlung*.[20] But it is

[19] The most famous example is surely Vladimir Nabokov's triumphant (though no doubt at least semi-ironic) discovery, based on the sparse anatomical information provided by the text, that Gregor would have been about three-feet long and most likely equipped with "flimsy little wings" that could have carried him "for miles and miles in a blundering flight." "Curiously enough," he adds, "Gregor the beetle never found out that he had wings under the hard covering of his back. (This is a very nice observation on my part to be treasured all your lives. Some Gregors, some Joes and Janes, do not know that they have wings.)" (259).

[20] In a letter to the Kurt Wolff Verlag dated 25 October 1915, Kafka implored his publisher not to place an illustration of the insect on the front cover of *Die Verwandlung*: "Das Insekt selbst kann nicht gezeichnet werden. Es kann aber nicht einmal von der Ferne aus gezeigt werden" (KKAB3 145).

not only the animal protagonists of Kafka's texts that are subject to such indeterminacy: it also applies to animals as objects of observation and study, such as the giant mole of "Der Dorfschullehrer," whose existence cannot be definitively proven, and which no one may actually even have seen—an irreducible ambiguity encapsulated in the title of the very work meant to demonstrate the existence to this extraordinary creature: "Ein Maulwurf, so groß, wie ihn noch *niemand* gesehen hat" (KKANI 199, emphasis added).

Similarly, the strange marten-like animal in the synagogue (KKANII 405–11), which many claim to have seen and is apparently "oft sehr gut zu sehn" (405), nevertheless recedes into ineffability as soon as the narrator attempts to describe its physical characteristics in more detail: it has bluish-green fur, he writes, but no one has ever touched it and "es läßt sich also darüber nichts sagen, fast möchte man behaupten, daß auch die wirkliche Farbe des Felles unbekannt ist" (406). The observable colour of the animal's fur may in fact be a product of its environment, the narrator suggests, since it is the same colour as the crumbling plasterwork on the inside of the synagogue, and he assumes that its "true" colour is likely something else, something indeterminable. But we might equally read this as an indication that the animal is not only indistinguishable from its surroundings, but actually an inextricable part of them: just as the animal is snugly ensconced in the synagogue, so too is it thoroughly embedded in its history and the discourse surrounding it. The story of the synagogue is the story of its peculiar animal inhabitant, and—like the leopards in the

temple, whose disruptions eventually become part of the ritual[21]—the apparent antagonism between the locals and the animal is in fact a strange form of symbiosis. Attempts to drive the animal out form an intrinsic part of the story and can thus never succeed. In the distant past, such an attempt was supposedly made—the narrator is sceptical about the veracity of these accounts, however, opining that they are most likely "erfundene Geschichten" (KKANII 410). Various esteemed rabbis are said to have weighed in on the question whether, "vom religionsgesetzlichen Standpunkt," such an animal can be tolerated in a house of God, and the majority recommended that the animal be driven out, "aber es war leicht von der Ferne zu dekretieren, in Wirklichkeit war es ja unmöglich, das Tier zu vertreiben" (411). This final sentence, which Kafka rewrote multiple times (KKANII *App.*, 336–8), provides a hint as to the nature of the difficulty of expelling the animal: the internal rhyme between "dekre*tier*en" and "das Tier," which appears from the third emendation onward, suggests that the animal is literally part of the words in which the decree is formulated. The animal is thus "always already" part of the very discourse that is set up to exclude it. Like the "Wesen der innern Erde" whom not even legends, let alone rational scientific discourse, can describe, the "Synagogentier" and the other ineffable animals in Kafka's texts resist description and encapsulation by language even as they exert an inescapable influence on the discourses that seek to circumscribe them.

[21] I am referring, of course, to Kafka's twentieth "Zürau Aphorism": "Leoparden brechen in den Tempel ein und saufen die Opferkrüge leer; das wiederholt sich immer wieder; schließlich kann man es vorausberechnen und es wird ein Teil der Ceremonie" (KKANII 117).

They are, in other words, animetaphors: at once "inside" and "outside" language, omnipresent and yet ungraspable. They are that which rational, logocentric discourse has sought to exclude or eradicate, to expel from its "house," but has never truly succeeded. Language, in Heidegger's famous formulation, "ist das Haus des Seins. In ihrer Behausung wohnt der Mensch" (HGA 9: 313). This house is also temple, strictly demarcated space,[22] a precinct: "Die Sprache ist der Bezirk (templum), d.h. das Haus des Seins" (HGA 5: 310). But, as Kafka repeatedly emphasises in his texts, this borough (*Bezirk*) may turn out to be a burrow, and although man may dwell there, it has other, non-human inhabitants as well, who may have been there before him, and regard him as nothing but "ein wüster Lump, der wohnen will ohne zu bauen" (KKANII 596). In the allegorically charged universe in which Kafka's narratives unfold, everything appears to take on metaphorical significance but it can be difficult or impossible to pin down what that significance is exactly, especially when it comes to animals. In the case of the giant rats in the "Kaldabahn" text, as we shall see, their incessant burrowing quickly develops into a metaphor for literary production, and this metaphorical association is underlined after the narrator literally "pins" a rat to the wall with his knife and examines it carefully and impassively. Yet in the context of the story, the rats' "production" is inherently destructive, perceived by the narrator as a threat from outside which he must endeavour to put a stop to. As in "Der Bau," the narrator is thus at pains to uphold the boundary he has established

[22] C.T. Onions gives the etymology of temple as "L. *templum* space marked out by an augur for taking observations, broad open space, consecrated space, sanctuary, prob. rel. to Gr. *témenos* reserved or sacred enclosure, f. base of *témnein* cut (cf. TMESIS, TOME)." Recall Serafino Gubbio's practice of "marking out the ground [*segnare il campo*]" as a preliminary framing gesture for representation.

between inside and outside, while the rats for their part labour tirelessly to undermine it. This too may be said to be characteristic of the function of animetaphor: it is something external to language but which is simultaneously at the very centre of linguistic expression. As such, it also has the power to make language "other" and to dispossess its user of exclusive ownership.

Horsemanship

Kafka frequently refers to his texts in animalistic terms. More specifically, on several occasions he conceives of them as horses and of his task as a writer as that of a rider or trainer, who must try to make them bend to his will and steer them in the right direction. As Malcolm Pasley writes: "die Metapher 'Pferd' für 'Erzählung', bzw. 'Reiter', 'Pferdedressur' usw. für 'Erzähler' [zieht] sich durch Kafkas ganzes Schaffen [hindurch]" ("Wie der Roman entstand," 26). Pasley points to the "Elberfeld" fragment (a.k.a. "Ein junger ehrgeiziger Student," written ca. Dec. 1914–Jan. 1915), as a commentary on Kafka's growing frustration with his lack of progress on his novel *Der Proceß*, and his misgivings about the new system of "dressage" he had been attempting to bring to bear on his writing. In the story, a young, ambitious student plans to acquire a horse and train it according to his new method, with which "wahrscheinlich jede Starrköpfigkeit überwunden werden konnte" (KKANI 225). Because of his limited financial means, he plans to abandon his studies and give private lessons during the day in order to be able to devote his nights to the actual business of training the horse, which requires complete concentration, as even the briefest dis-

traction of the horse's attention would do irreparable damage to his dressage.[23] The best way to avoid distractions is to work at night: "Nur die Nacht ist die Zeit der eindringenden Dressur" (KKANI 416).

The parallels to Kafka's own habit of writing at night are sufficiently clear—more interesting is the conception of this nocturnal pedagogy (or rather, I suppose, hippogogy) not as a process of domestication, but rather of coaxing out and cultivating the *wildness* of the animal:

> Die Reizbarkeit, von der Mensch und Tier, wenn sie in der Nacht wachen und arbeiten, ergriffen werden, war in seinem Plan ausdrücklich verlangt. Er fürchtete nicht wie andere Sachverständige die Wildheit des Pferdes, er forderte sie vielmehr, ja er wollte sie erzeugen, zwar nicht durch die Peitsche aber durch das Reizmittel seiner unablässigen Anwesenheit und des unablässigen Unterrichts. (KKANI 227)

This is probably as close to a definition of his zoopoetics as Kafka ever formulated. The most important aspect of the student's plan is that it calls for exceptional receptivity to stimuli on the part of the human as well as the animal. This is a reciprocal process—the young man is both a teacher and a student, after all, and he is only interested in an "allgemeinen Fortschritt," not the pitiful and embarrassing "einzelne Fortschritte" (227) that his rivals have been content to vaunt themselves with.

The student's interest in the Elberfeld horses is spurred by his conviction that, given the right method and sufficient patience, it will be possible to achieve some-

[23] On the significance of these recurring "Augenblicke der Unaufmerksamkeit" in Kafka, see Nägele "Auf der Suche." The most prominent example is no doubt the fate of the *Jäger Gracchus*, whose tale is framed by dual lapses in attention: first the hunter's own, when he is distracted from his wolf-hunt by a chamois and plunges to his death, and second by the helmsman of his death ship, who "verfehlte die Fahrt," dooming Gracchus to sail the waters of the earth for eternity, trapped, like many of Kafka's protagonists, "in a hopeless and unbearable limbo, between life and death" (Cohn 146).

thing approaching true symbiosis of horse and rider, such as that expressed in "Wunsch, Indianer zu werden" (KKAD 32–33), where the horse's head and neck gradually disappear along with the need for reins and spurs, until the horse and its rider become seamlessly merged in what Detlef Kremer calls a "kentaurische Verschmelzung" ("Verschollen," 247). The fact that this fusion of man and horse is achieved by purely linguistic means—the subtle, almost imperceptible transition from subjunctive to indicative—allows this image to serve as an emblem of an ideal form of writing, an ideal also gestured towards in the name of the protagonist of Kafka's first unfinished novel, *Der Verschollene*: Karl Roßmann (literally: horse-man).

Let us recall Walter Benjamin's comment that Kafka's animals "sind wohl nicht das Ziel; aber ohne sie geht es nicht" ("Kafka," 430). Kafka's poetics is a poetics of animality because in order to reach his goal, an animal is required. But what is the goal? A possible answer may be found in a short text entitled "Der Aufbruch" (1921), which presents an image of a rider embarking on such a zoopoetic journey: "Ich befahl mein Pferd aus dem Stall zu holen. Der Diener verstand mich nicht. Ich ging selbst in den Stall, sattelte mein Pferd und bestieg es." When the manservant asks him where he is going, the narrator replies:

> "nur weg von hier, nur weg von hier. Immerfort weg von hier, nur so kann ich mein Ziel erreichen." "Du kennst also dein Ziel?", fragte er. "Ja", antwortete ich, "ich sagte es doch: 'Weg-von-hier', das ist mein Ziel." (KKANII 374–75)

The *telos* of this "wahrhaft ungeheuere Reise" is simply "away-from-here"—it is, if you will, an infinite "line of flight" with no possible destination or end point. Kafka's prose has been described as "initiofugal," meaning that only the opening situation

matters, it "does not strive towards an end" and thus "cannot be completed" (qtd. in Corngold "Metamorphosis," 92). A rider embarking on such a journey should not hope to reach the next village—the ride is all there is.

Such zoopoetic experiments are not without risk, however, and for the most part the successful fusion of horse and rider, text and writer, proves unattainable—it is significant that the "kentaurische Verschmelzung" of "Wunsch, Indianer zu werden" is presented as a dream or a fantasy. The "Elberfeld" text ends with a profession of the young student's diffidence in his ability to deliver the total, unblinking concentration that his method requires. A moment's inattention is all it takes to derail the entire undertaking: "Ein Pferd stolperte, fiel auf die Vorderbeine nieder, der Reiter wurde abgeworfen" (KKANII 298). Sometimes such accidents seem to mark the beginning of a new narrative, but these texts usually break off after a few sentences. "Der Aufbruch" is an exception in this regard, because its hero is lucky enough to find his horse and saddle it himself, despite the incompetence and incomprehension of his servants. But in most cases, either the rider is too weak to ride,[24] or it is the wrong horse altogether,[25] or else the horse has mysteriously died during the night,[26] as at the beginning of "Ein Landarzt," forcing the protagonist to make use of two

[24] "Ich wurde zu meinem Pferd geführt, ich war aber noch sehr schwach." (KKANI 417)

[25] "Das ist nicht mein Pferd, sagte ich als mir der Knecht des Gasthofes am Morgen ein Pferd vorführte" (417)

[26] "in den Pelz gepackt, die Instrumententasche in der Hand, stand ich reisefertig schon auf dem Hofe; aber das Pferd fehlte, das Pferd. Mein eigenes Pferd war in der letzten Nacht, infolge der Überanstrengung in diesem eisigen Winter, verendet" (KKAD 252–53).

demonic, unearthly steeds that he cannot control and leave him stranded in the frozen winter landscape.[27]

Brief images of difficult or failed animal training abound in Kafka's writings, especially in the later notebooks. In the so-called "Konvolut 1920," for instance, we find the story of the famous *Dresseur* Burson, who has been called upon to assess the "Dressurfähigkeit" of a tiger, which, having been recently fed, lazily looks around the "Dressurkäfig," yawns and promptly falls asleep (KKANII 269), marking the end of the text. (This well-fed tiger is no doubt a cousin of the panther that supersedes the "Hungerkünstler" in his cage). More troubling is the strange kangaroo-like animal with the "viele Meter langen fuchsartigen Schweif," which the narrator of a slightly later fragment says he would like to hold in his hand, but cannot because the animal won't sit still and keeps its tail in constant motion. "Manchmal habe ich das Gefühl daß mich das Tier dressieren will" he writes: "was hätte es sonst für einen Zweck mir den Schwanz zu entziehn, wenn ich nach ihm greife, dann wieder ruhig zu warten, bis es mich wieder verlockt und dann von neuem weiterzuspringen" (KKANII 335). In this comical scene, the roles are reversed: instead of training the animal, it is the narrator who is being trained. The animal's large bushy tail exhibits a certain similarity to a quill, and if the narrator could only manage to grasp it, he might be able to harness the wild animality of this creature and channel it into his own artistic

[27] Isolde Schiffermüller views the texts published in the collection *Ein Landarzt* (1920), most of which were written in 1917, as records ("Protokolle") of the nocturnal experiments announced in the "Elberfeldheft." And, to be sure, there is a conspicuous abundance of horses in the stories contained in that volume. "Es sind Erzählungen, die die Grenze der menschlichen Sprachordnung befragen und die Schwelle erkunden, an der sich die Stimme der Tiere von der Sprache der Signifikanten scheidet" ("Elberfelder Protokolle," 87).

project. At the same time, the narrator's myopic focus on the animal's tail hints at the phrase "das Pferd beim Schwanz aufzäumen," suggesting that he may be putting the cart before the horse and that his whole approach is hopelessly misguided. The idealised, wished-for form of becoming-animal in Kafka's texts invariably involves potentially tameable animals (horses, dogs, apes, tigers, fox-tailed kangaroos, etc.), and when the protagonists' efforts at controlling or training these animals result in failure, the result is almost always comical. By contrast, the involuntary becomings-animal, which involve intractable and abject animals (wolves, rats, insects), are terrifyingly successful.

III. "Ein widerspenstiger Boden"

As Malcolm Pasley has observed, throughout his work, Kafka "sets up effigies (or even caricatures) of himself, follows them with a greater or lesser degree of implicit irony through their fictive situations, and condemns them for the most part to destruction" ("Burrow," 424–25). There is always a temptation to want to identify Kafka with his protagonists, but these ironic self-portraits reveal the danger of doing so. The magnificent Burson, the young ambitious student, and the countless other unnamed protagonists who try in vain to assert themselves in the face of the text and the animals that populate it, are not Kafka; their failures are not Kafka's failures. And perhaps our sympathies should not lie with them. Let us return now to the "Kaldabahn" text, and see how the nameless protagonist fares in his struggle against the inhospitable landscape.

If "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn" has primarily been read biographically and/or allegorically as a self-reflexive meditation on Kafka's life as a writer, it is because this text, like so many of Kafka's writings, seems to invite just such an interpretation. In the second half, the narrator's antagonistic relationship to his surroundings and the indigenous fauna ultimately forces him to abandon his position with the railway company and return to civilization, at which point the text breaks off. In this, as in other aspects, the fate of the protagonist of the "Kaldabahn" fragment appears to mirror Kafka's own experience while writing it. Michael Müller notes that the final sentence, describing the narrator's decision to seek medical assistance in Kalda, is crossed out in the manuscript (KKAT *App*. 358), and concludes that Kafka deleted the sentence "weil es sich um das endgültige und definitive Eingeständnis gehandelt hätte, daß das Lebensexperiment gescheitert ist: es bleibt ihm nur die Flucht aus der Einöde heraus zurück zu den Menschen" (Müller "Wohin?" 82–3). Based on the *ductus* of these final lines, Müller surmises that Kafka's Kalda "experiment" came to an end in November 1914, roughly three months after he had begun writing the story (76).[28] Shortly thereafter, Kafka wrote in his diary that he could not go on writing, that he had reached his limit, "[u]nd wie irgendein gänzlich von Menschen losge-

[28] Here, again, the story appears to mirror the conditions under which it was written. Kafka began writing it in mid-August; as the narrator arrives in Kalda it is still summer and he frequently mentions the need to prepare for the coming winter. Kafka seems to have abandoned the story in mid-to-late-November, roughly three months after it was begun; some three months after his arrival in Kalda, the narrator falls ill with his mysterious wolf's cough and is forced to leave his post with the railway company. Despite these precise temporal markers, however, the chronology of the text frequently appears protracted or otherwise unreliable. The inspector, for instance, comes once a month to check the logbooks, which means that he can only have come two or three times before the narrator falls ill, and yet his visits are described in a way that implies a continuity and routine that can hardly have established itself over such a short space of time.

trenntes Tier schaukele ich schon wieder den Hals und möchte versuchen für die Zwischenzeit wieder F zu bekommen" (KKAT 702). Müller thus interprets the narrator's self-imposed Russian exile as a metaphor for Kafka's determination to isolate himself from the world following his break-up with Felice.

But what of Kafka's animal simile ("wie irgendein gänzlich von Menschen losgetrenntes Tier")? We might take this to correspond to the narrator's curious illness, which the locals know as "Wolfshusten," and which spells the end of his "Lebensexperiment." Thus, having become (like) an animal, Kafka abandons the story just as his narrator abandons his position at the railway when his own becoming-animal begins to manifest itself. According to the "rules" elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari concerning the development of Kafka's stories into novels, this is inevitable, for, as they write, "when a text deals essentially with a becoming-animal, it cannot be developed into a novel," whereas "a text that can be the seed of a novel will be abandoned if Kafka imagines an animal escape that allows him to finish with it" (*Kafka*, 38). In this case, then, it is the narrator's becoming-wolf that constitutes an "animal escape" (for Kafka, that is) and thus marks the end of the story. But the narrator's decision to move to this remote place was already conceived as an escape from his everyday existence, for reasons "die nicht hierhergehören" (KKAT 549)—which means that this would effectively be an escape from an escape.[29] Deleuze and Guattari do

[29] We may note the parallel here (particularly in the context of Kafka's failed engagement with Felice) with K.'s conversation with Pepi in *Das Schloß*, in which he admits to having neglected his fiancée Frieda, and that that is the most likely reason she left him: "Das ist leider wahr, ich habe sie vernachlässigt, aber das hatte besondere Gründe, *die nicht hierher gehören*; ich wäre glücklich, wenn sie zu mir zurückkäme, aber ich würde gleich wieder anfangen, sie zu vernachlässigen" (KKAS 480, emphasis added). This phrase occurs in a number of Kafka's texts, almost invariably with reference to unre-

not actually discuss the narrator's "Wolfshusten" in their essay on Kafka, but rather only his encounter with the rats. "Kafka," they write, "is fascinated by everything that is small" (37),[30] but as his Zürau letters attest, this fascination is more akin to abject terror, and in any case the defining characteristic of the rats in the "Kaldabahn" story is their unusually large size. Furthermore, the progression from becoming-animal to becoming-molecular and imperceptible, which Deleuze and Guattari identify in the stories as a factor in the transition from animal to the machinic assemblage explored in the novels, is in fact reversed in "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn": the rats at first appear as an undifferentiated mass of black dots advancing on the narrator's hut, but he later stabs one of these rats with his knife and lifts it up to scrutinise it "in Augenhöhe" as an individual specimen.

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solved issues of familial shame and guilt, which go unspoken but nevertheless continue to haunt the text. In *Das Urteil*, for instance, when Georg's father accuses him of not telling the truth (about his friend in Russia? or about something else?), he adds: "Ich will nicht Dinge aufrühren, *die nicht hierher gehören*. Seit dem Tode unserer teueren Mutter sind gewisse unschöne Dinge vorgegangen" (KKAD 52, emphasis added)—including, presumably, Georg's engagement to Frieda Brandenfeld, (another Frieda, whose initials mirror those of Felice Bauer, a link Kafka himself emphasised). Similarly, in "Der Heizer" (the first chapter of *Der Verschollene*, written in late September 1912, just days after *Das Urteil*), Karl Roßmann's uncle explains that he has been living apart from his European relatives for years "aus Gründen, die erstens *nicht hierher gehören*, und die zweitens zu erzählen mich wirklich zu sehr hernehmen würde" (KKAD 96, emphasis added). He says that he dreads the day when he may be forced to tell his nephew the reasons for his exile, because it will require him to speak frankly about Karl's parents and their relatives. These reasons that 'do not belong' and 'shall go unmentioned' thus seem to pertain primarily to Oedipal relations, which through the rhetorical gesture of paralipsis are invoked through the very process of dismissing them and thus placed "under erasure." If becoming-animal serves as a "line of flight" out of such Oedipal structures of frustrated desire, then the need for a second, animal escape might be explained by the fact that in beginning with such a paraliptic gesture, the text represents a failure to find a way out of the *Gründe* it seeks to leave behind.

[30] Their comments in this regard rely heavily on Canetti's discussion of the "Kaldabahn" story.

As the narrator explains, one of the reasons he decided to take this job as a railway station agent in the middle of the Russian steppe was the prospect of hunting:

> Man hatte mir gesagt, es sei eine außerordentlich wildreiche Gegend und ich hatte mir schon ein Gewehr gesichert, das ich mir, wenn ich einiges Geld erspart haben würde, nachschicken lassen wollte. Nun zeigte sich daß von jagdbarem Wild hier keine Spur war, nur Wölfe und Bären sollten hier vorkommen, in den ersten Monaten sah ich keine, und außerdem waren eigentümliche große Ratten hier, die ich gleich beobachten konnte, wie sie in Mengen wie vom Wind geweht über die Steppe liefen. Aber das Wild, auf das ich mich gefreut hatte gab es nicht. (688–9)

The narrator's ambition of becoming a hunter, of tracking and killing his own game, has to do with his desire to become "möglichst unabhängig von allen" (552), just as his plans to purchase a cow and cultivate a small vegetable patch. The lack of suitable game for the narrator to hunt is thus an additional blow to his bid for independence and self-sufficiency, and is instrumental in exacerbating his already fragile health. The shotgun he has procured is rendered superfluous, so he never sends for it, but even the tools he does have prove ineffectual in taming this wilderness. The narrator's efforts to till the soil also result in failure because "ich war zu schwach um diesen Boden zu bezwingen. Ein widerspenstiger Boden, der bis ins Frühjahr festgefroren war und selbst meiner neuen scharfen Hacke widerstand" (552). As a result of this strenuous and frustrating work, the narrator suffers "Verzweiflungsanfälle" and takes to his bed in the cabin, not even emerging to greet the passing trains.

"Widerspenstiger Boden" is also the phrase used by the animal narrator of "Der Bau" to describe the earth inside which he has laboriously constructed his bur-

row (KKANII 601). The narrator of the "Kaldabahn" fragment, however, is in every respect ill-equipped to undertake such domesticating measures, and is ultimately unable to carve out a liveable space for himself in these harsh surroundings. The landscape around his cabin is described as a featureless, frozen wasteland, stretching "in einer einzigen Fläche" in every direction "ohne die geringste Erhöhung" (552) as far as the eye can see. As always in Kafka, this flat, white expanse seems to indicate the blank page, upon which the author is vainly trying to make his mark.[31] It is across this white expanse that the narrator observes the mass of black dots converging on the railway station—"Es waren ganze Gesellschaften, ganze Trupps" (686). At first he takes these apparitions for a mere optical illusion, caused by the distance separating him from his hut, but it later becomes clear that these are in fact the first sign of the hordes of giant indigenous rats mentioned later in the text. Here, they are described in both social and militaristic terms, doubly opposed to the narrator both passively (he is solitary; they form a group or community) and actively (like a marauding army descending on his defenceless hut). Like the footprints of the small arctic dogs which the "Kübelreiter" follows across the "Weißgefrorene Eisfläche" (KKANI *App.,*

[31] Michael Müller presents physical evidence to support this reading: "Die ersten beiden Abschnitte des *Kaldabahn*-Textes sind mit einer offenbar schon stark abgenutzten Feder geschrieben [...] im weiteren Verlauf der Niederschrift hat die Feder angefangen, sich zu spreizen, so daß Doppelkonturen entstanden. Im dritten Abschnitt hat Kafka dann die defekte Feder durch eine neue ersetzt" (80). The "neue scharfe Hacke" the narrator mentions shortly thereafter may thus be taken to allude to this newly replaced writing instrument.

Compare also this untitled fragment from the spring of 1922, where Kafka employs the same extended metaphor: "Ich wollte mich im Unterholz verstecken, mit der Hacke bahnte ich mir ein Stück Weges, dann verkroch ich mich und war geborgen" (KKANII 370). Jochen Thermann has traced the image of trailblazing in Kafka's writings, with particular reference to Rotpeter's search for an "Ausweg" and his use of the phrase "sich in die Büsche schlagen" as a metaphor for forging a new path where there are none, a "way out" of an *aporia* (ἀ-πορία, from πόρος, path).

275; Kremer *Erotik*, 26–29), these black dots on a white background suggest letters or words on the page—words which, moreover, the narrator is unable to read or adequately interpret.

The next encounter with the rats occurs at much closer quarters. The narrator, still without a shotgun, resorts to defending himself and his food supplies from the rats with a long knife. Once, having stabbed one of these encroaching rats, he lifts it up on the end of his knife and pins it against the wall in order to observe its pathetic struggle for life, and, he insists, to get a clear, detailed look at these creatures. "Man sieht kleinere Tiere erst dann genau," he says, "wenn man sie vor sich in Augenhöhe hat; wenn man sich zu ihnen zur Erde beugt und sie dort ansieht, bekommt man eine falsche unvollständige Vorstellung von ihnen" (689). The narrator's objectifying gaze and quasi-scientific interest in documenting the physical features of this rat is made possible only through an act of casual violence and cruelty. His insistence on scrutinising the animal at eye-level is in no way geared toward establishing an equal or de-hierarchised basis for inter-specific encounter, but rather cements the pre-existing power-dynamic inherent in the relationship between human subject and animal object.

And yet, the encounter also contains a specular moment of sorts, revealing, once the observer and the observed find themselves at eye-level with each other, a potential avenue of identification and exchange which is then promptly abandoned, and things appear to go back to how they were before. But in fact something does pass between these two at this moment. There is a transference of agency, or at least an acknowledgement of this creature's specific identity which has a profound effect on

the course of the narrative from this point forward. "Das Auffallendste an diesen Ratten," the narrator writes,

> waren die Krallen, groß, ein wenig gehöhlt und am Ende doch zugespitzt, sie waren sehr zum Graben geeignet. Im letzten Krampf, in dem die Ratte vor mir an der Wand hieng, spannte sie dann die Krallen scheinbar gegen ihre lebendige Natur straff aus, sie waren einem Händchen ähnlich, das sich einem entgegenstreckt. (690)

Here, again, a metaleptic substitution of digging or burrowing (*graben*) for writing (*graphein*)[32] suggests itself through the description of this animal's quill-like claws, even as, in its death throes, the rat becomes anthropomorphised, its claws coming to resemble a tiny human hand, reaching out imploringly to its fellow creature. This gesture occurs seemingly "against its nature." The species fellowship fleetingly glimpsed at this extreme moment runs counter to the "natural" order of hostile relations, which, moreover, are predicated on the rats' superior digging capability just as much as they are on the narrator's casually violent acts of self-preservation. That is to say, the fact that the claws of these indigenous rats are uniquely suited to digging contrasts sharply with the narrator's ineffectual attempts at tilling this foreign and intractable soil. Thus burrowing is quite literally *in their nature*, and, as the narrator

[32] Various critics have explored this link, particularly with reference to *Der Bau*. In addition to the passage in Menke cited in footnote 10 above, see also Detlef Kremer: "Der Zusammenhang von 'graben' und 'schreiben' ist über das griechische 'graphein' etymologisch möglich, Schreiben ist ein Vorgang des Eingravierens. Kafka hat mit dieser etymologischen Referenz häufiger gespielt und sie bisweilen um Anspielungen erweitert" (*Erotik*, 151), and Hans-Jörg Bay: "Da es sich bei diesem Werk um eine Höhle handelt und sich das Bauen somit als Graben vollzieht, wird ein Verständnis von Schreiben (*graphein*) als Graben und Eingraben aufgerufen, zusätzlich überdeterminiert durch Andeutungen, die den Bau in der Entgegensetzung zur 'Oberwelt' und zum 'Leben' als eine Art Grab erscheinen lassen" (60). Cf. also Gerhard Kurz: "Schon der Bau als Ort in der Unterwelt ist ein 'Grab', das sich das Tier gräbt" (168).

fast discovers, it takes the form of relentless and destructive nocturnal "attacks" on his hut and his livelihood.

The narrator's urge to counteract the "falsche unvollständige Vorstellung" of the animal reveals his desire to grasp the object in its entirety, from a rational, objective perspective. But it is in fact this perspective that is wrong: it is a mistake to think that one can ever *know* the object completely, least of all if one persists in thinking of it as entirely different from oneself. Thus when the narrator realises that the rat's claws are like a human hand, it undermines the rational, anthropocentric perspective, establishing a metaphorical link ("einem Händchen ähnlich") between man and animal. When the narrator pinned the rat to the wall, it became a specimen, an object of detached, rational observation. The act of lifting the animal up into "Augenhöhe" is tantamount to fixing the non-linguistic in language, constraining it to a strictly defined and immutable concept. "The animal dies at the moment it is thrust into contact with abstraction, with language" (Lippit *Electric*, 48). While pinned to the wall of the narrator's hut, the dead, anthropomorphised rat suddenly becomes comprehensible at a human scale. But down below, "im Innern der Erde," the digging continues. What is more, this subterranean murine activity is not only unavoidable; it is an indispensible part of the structure of the text—and, indeed, of language itself.

In a short fragment from 1922, Kafka writes: "Der allerunterste Raum des Oceandampfers, der das ganze Schiff durchgeht, ist völlig leer, allerdings ist er kaum ein Meter hoch. Die Konstruktion des Schiffes verlangt diesen leeren Raum. Ganz leer ist er freilich nicht, er gehört den Ratten" (KKANII 421). This ocean-liner is a metaphor not only for the text itself, but for language in general. It is not entirely

clear exactly why this hollow space is necessary. Presumably this pocket of air serves to stabilise the ship and keep it afloat. But it is a mistake to think of this space as empty simply because it is not suited to human occupancy. This space, unused and incompatible with human measurements, is nevertheless integral to the functioning of the superstructure. Any attempt to eliminate it would run the risk of scuttling the entire vessel. The goal, therefore, has to be to find a way of setting aside a space and thus integrating the unavoidable animal presence into the blueprints, lest the ship be overrun by these "unerwarteten, ungebetenen, unvermeidbaren" creatures, with their silent, determined, secret objectives.

IV. Inhabiting the Text

The narrator's hut, we read, is actually more of a shed, left over from when the railway was being built, consisting of a single room equipped with a bunk and a desk "für mögliche Schreibarbeiten" (550). He does not, however, appear to engage in any writing beyond the bookkeeping required of his job, with which the inspector who comes once a month automatically finds fault. But in any case this is a different kind of writing than the "graben" toward which the rats are so naturally predisposed, and the "gardening" which the narrator so abortively attempted. The ability to burrow through the frozen earth, rather than simply to build tracks across it, tracks which lead nowhere and serve no purpose but which must nevertheless be endlessly and rigorously maintained—*that* is the truly transformative writing to which Kafka and so many of his protagonists aspire. "Nur so kann geschrieben werden," he had written two years previously of his story *Das Urteil*, having completed it in one night, "nur in

einem solchen Zusammenhang, mit solcher vollständigen Öffnung des Leibes und der Seele" (KKAT 416). Kafka, like these rats, worked at night, but he rarely if ever achieved the kind of openness and coherence as he did that one night in late September 1912. This, like the "kentaurische Verschmelzung" described above, is the ideal form of writing.

In early October 1917, about a month before his terrible "Mäusenacht," Kafka wrote a letter to Max Brod from Zürau telling his friend that he had been reading but not writing, and nor did he have any desire to write, before concluding: "Könnte ich mich wie die Fledermaus durch Graben von Löchern retten, würde ich Löcher graben." Clearly it is not as easy for Kafka to write literature as it is for the bat to dig holes, but both activities constitute an existential necessity, a "way out" (or, perhaps, a "line of flight") to salvation. Even for the Russian rats, however, the compulsive burrowing represents hard, seemingly senseless work. "Es war ganz nutzlose Arbeit," the narrator notes upon observing one of the rats feverishly clawing away at the wall from outside,

> denn um für sich ein genügend großes Loch zu graben, hätte sie tagelang arbeiten müssen und sie entfloh doch schon, sobald der Tag nur ein wenig sich aufhellte, trotzdem arbeitete sie, wie ein Arbeiter, der sein Ziel kennt. Und sie leistete gute Arbeit, es waren zwar unmerkliche Teilchen, die unter ihrem Graben aufflogen, aber ohne Ergebnis wurde die Kralle wohl niemals angesetzt. (690)

In the interplay of affirmation and negation, or, in this instance, negation and reaffirmation, this passage exemplifies the style of the text as a whole—a particularly Kafkaesque rhetorical gesture, which Gerhard Neumann famously called Kafka's "gleitendes Paradox." Here, the rat's activity is at first described as futile and sense-

less, but gradually its persistence gives way to "gute Arbeit," and finally it appears that the rat knows exactly what it is doing and that this work is proceeding at a steady, albeit glacially slow pace. This nocturnal diligence is reminiscent of both the "unaufhörlich tätiges Volk" in "Der Bau," who spoil the animal narrator's burrow with their burrowing while he is asleep, as well as the "geheimabsichtliche Erscheinen" of the mice in Zürau, who, Kafka fears, have dug their tunnels through every inch of the walls of his room.

But there is a further significance to this description, which has to do with the conception of this persistent, seemingly fruitless, yet ultimately purposeful and rewarding activity as the embodiment of a particular form of writing, indeed, as a particular way of inhabiting the text. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the narrator and the rats (or, more properly, the frozen landscape as a whole) may be seen as analogous to the relationship between the author and the text, which, in Kafka's case, is frequently characterised in terms of domination or cultivation. Hence, until the writer succeeds in "breaking" the text, it remains recalcitrant (*widerspenstig*) and the relationship between him and the text will be antagonistic. But more than that, the text will actively seek to counteract the author's incursions into this territory, just as the rats relentlessly seek to undermine the walls of the narrator's hut. He, in turn, stuffs the holes with straw and tow, and kills whatever rats he comes across. The constant oscillation between the rats' burrowing and the narrator's reparations mirrors the ebb and flow of negation and re-affirmation that characterises the language of the text itself. In a sense, the text, embodied in the pack of black rats that inhabit this space, is constantly preoccupied, for its own "secret purposes" (*ge-*

heimabsichtlich), with undoing whatever progress the writer has made to bend it to his own wishes. At the same time, however, it is important to note that this burrowing is in itself an act of creation, but one whose purpose is inscrutable to the narrator and which must hence be at odds with his own aims and desires.

In "Der Bau," the narrator has learnt how to construct his own burrow within this stubborn ground, and although his fellow inhabitants have not ceased their furious industry, the structural damage wrought by these smaller creatures is significantly less serious and the narrator is more easily able to accommodate their additions and alterations into his plan. He is inside the text in a way the narrator of the "Kaldabahn" story could never be: although the deletion of the final sentence to a certain extent leaves him stranded there, unable to return to civilisation, the narrative perspective announced in the first sentence—"es ist nun schon viele Jahre her" (549)—assures the reader that the narrator lived to tell the tale.[33] But even in the burrow there are lingering doubts about the relationship between the narrator and the ground of the text. He has learnt to live with the little animals that create connecting tunnels between those he himself has chosen to construct, and although they may alter the overall structure of the burrow, they nevertheless form part of it and can be incorporated into his plan. The more serious threat, as we saw earlier, lies in the mythical and obscure "Wesen der innern Erde" who have the capacity to expropriate this textual construct and evict the narrator from it entirely—suddenly it is no longer

[33] The abrupt end of the story has led Karl-Heinz Fingerhut to conclude that "Der von Krankheit geschwächte Jäger wird vermutlich zum Schluß von den unheimlichen Ratten umgebracht" (*Tierfiguren*, 73), but this reading is difficult to reconcile with the story's opening.

his burrow which the other, smaller creatures are spoiling, but rather *their* burrow, which the narrator has been illegally occupying. Once the polarities of ownership and intrusion, inside and outside have been reversed in this way, there is no hope of escape, let alone of regaining one's control: "man hört das Kratzen ihrer Krallen knapp unter sich in der Erde, die ihr Element ist, und schon ist man verloren" (KKANII 578).

We see something of this already in "Erinnerungen an die Kaldabahn," particularly in the giant rats and their relentless attacks. They too appear to be "in their element"; their claws are uniquely suited to burrowing, and they seem intent on destroying the narrator's hut. Awakened by the sound of clawing one night, the narrator goes outside in order to get a look at the rat trying to get in. As he describes it, the animal's snout and front paws are so thoroughly wedged into the hole it is excavating that "[m]an hätte glauben können, jemand halte in der Hütte die Krallen fest und wolle das ganze Tier hineinziehen" (691). This scene anticipates a future reversal as the narrator goes outside in order to inspect the progress of the rat toward the inside. At the moment, it is still only halfway there, and he easily dispatches it with a well-aimed kick. Yet the rats' incursions into his domestic space (such as it is), seen from a different perspective, at the rats' eye-level perhaps, might easily be reinterpreted as an attempt to repair the damage caused by the narrator's (and the railway company's) incursion into *their* territory.

V. Wolfshusten

For the time being, the narrator's hut is still standing, and with it the distinction between inside and outside that makes his life possible in this inhospitable climate. But soon—a mere three months after his arrival—these boundaries are rendered effectively meaningless as the narrator's body falls victim to an incursion from the surrounding landscape in the form of a serious illness accompanied by a violent cough. When the train crew hear this cough, they refer to it as *Wolfshusten*. "Seitdem begann ich das Heulen aus dem Husten herauszuhören. Ich saß auf dem Bänkchen vor der Hütte und begrüßte heulend den Zug, heulend begleitete ich seine Abfahrt" (693). It is striking how the narrator only begins to notice the howling once his condition has been given an animal *name*. That is to say, the inarticulate sounds which the narrator is now compelled to utter are seemingly called forth through language. The condition is thus linguistically determined, and is, on some fundamental level, brought about by contact with a specific type of language embodied by the surrounding landscape. If you will pardon the expression, this is a textually transmitted disease.

At the same time, this quasi-lycanthropic transformation represents the next stage in the process that began with the anthropomorphisation of the rat's claw into a tiny hand. The transference of human and animal attributes, which the narrator resisted at the time, now becomes unavoidable. Having failed to begin "writing like a rat," he now instead begins howling like a wolf and is forced to stop trying to defend his hut from the rats. All he can do is kneel on his bunk with his head buried in animal furs in order not to have to listen to the terrible howling. He is thus fully im-

mersed in markers of animality. Covering his face may muffle the sound, but it does not provide an escape from the animal which now resides within his own body. The wolf is the "gänzlich von Menschen losgetrenntes Tier" *par excellence*. As such, then, far from marking the failure of his "Lebensexperiment," this metamorphosis ultimately represents its logical conclusion: the narrator had sought a way to live as far away from other people as possible, in becoming like a wolf, he has become alienated even from himself. There is nothing left to do but to return to civilisation; the story must end here. The unmistakable assonance of the names "Kalda" and "Kafka"—another example of what Malcolm Pasley long ago called Kafka's "semi-private games"—means that in abandoning his solitary exile and returning to Kalda, he is, in effect, returning to himself.

We have already seen how Kafka considers his texts in animalistic terms, where the ultimate goal was to effectuate a centauric fusion of the rider/writer with the horse/text. The "Wolfshusten" cannot be said to represent this form of idealised symbiosis any more than the narrator's exhortation to examine small animals at eye-level can. Throughout the narrative, he has sought to fend off the indigenous animals and establish his autonomy in this textual landscape; his illness puts a definitive end to such ambitions and he must admit defeat. Unable to defend his hut from the rats, it is only a matter of time before its walls collapse entirely, leaving nothing to separate him from the rest of the landscape. Worse, even his body is not his own, having been taken over by an animal presence which compels him to vocalise in a non-human idiom that he cannot endure much less understand.

In this, his fate mirrors that of Gregor Samsa (another assonant cryptogram of the author's name), whose transformation into an "ungeheueres Ungeziefer" is likewise marked by the transformation of his voice into an animal voice, which neither his family nor the *Prokurist* can understand. At first, Gregor's voice is still "unverkennbar seine frühere [...], in die sich aber, wie von unten her, ein nicht zu unterdrückendes, schmerzliches Piepsen mischte" (KKAD 119). This indomitable squeaking or chirping sound comes up 'from below' to disrupt the semantic integrity of the spoken word, rendering his speech incomprehensible: "[ein Piepsen], das die Worte förmlich nur im ersten Augenblick in ihrer Deutlichkeit beließ, um sie im Nachklang derart zu zerstören, daß man nicht wußte, ob man recht gehört hatte" (119). This disruptive noise is the animal part of speech, the physical, a-semantic "grain" of the voice, which the λόγος has tried so hard to suppress. It belongs to a whole series of inarticulate noises in Kafka's writings, which includes Josefine's "Pfeifen," the unsettling "Zischen" in the burrow, and the "Heulen" of the wolf's cough.[34]

One of the most striking examples is the inarticulate "Schrei der Dohle" of the invading nomads in "Ein altes Blatt." Like the "Russia" of the "Kaldabahn" story, the "China" of this old manuscript serves as a vague geographical space of writing, where

[34] Gerhard Kurz lists several others, noting that "[d]as Rauschen oder verwandte, im Vergleich zum Wort unbestimmte, unartikulierte Lautphänomene bilden in Kafkas Werk einen auffallenden Motivkomplex. [...] Zu diesem Motivkomplex gehört auch das Dröhnen des Gerichts in 'Fürsprecher', das Rauschen im Erzählfragment 'Der Quälgeist' und im Dramenfragment 'Der Gruftwächter', das Pfeifen von Josefine in 'Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse', das Rascheln in 'Die Sorge des Hausvaters', der Schrei der Dohlen in 'Ein altes Blatt', das Piepsen in Gregors Stimme in 'Die Verwandlung'" ("Rauschen," 165). The howling wolf's cough belongs to this *Motivkomplex* as well.

the efforts at constructing the Great Wall, like the doomed Kalda railway, are undermined by incompetence on the part of the builders and threatened by a wild, indomitable indigenous population. Like the rats, these nomadic "Nordvölker" have easily penetrated the fragmentary and hopelessly ineffectual defences designed to keep them at bay; indeed, they seem to have a clearer idea of the layout and the progress in building the wall than the ones building it (KKANI 339). Now these nomads have occupied the imperial capital, disrupting the lives of the people who live there, taking whatever they want. "Sprechen kann man mit den Nomaden nicht," says the narrator:

> Unsere Sprache kennen sie nicht, ja sie haben kaum eine eigene. Unter einander verständigen sie sich ähnlich wie Dohlen. Immer wieder hört man diesen Schrei der Dohlen. Unsere Lebensweise, unsere Einrichtungen sind ihnen ebenso unbegreiflich wie gleichgültig. Infolgedessen zeigen sie sich auch gegen jede Zeichensprache ablehnend. (KKANI 359)

The nomads reject any and all forms of signification, rendering all communication with them impossible. Their jackdaw cries are an example of the inarticulate, prelinguistic voice of nature (cf. Vogl 247). But while the nomads seem to be able to understand each other (*sich verständigen*), their unimpeded presence in the capital is viewed as a fundamental misunderstanding. The fate of the fatherland now rests in the hands of the merchants and craftsmen, says the narrator, who identifies himself as a cobbler, but they are not up to the task: "Ein Mißverständnis ist es, und wir gehn daran zugrunde" (KKANI 361). The destructive influence of this inarticulate non-language on the surrounding narrative is indicated by an editorial note, which follows the text in the notebooks but was not included when the text was prepared for

publication. It presents "Ein altes Blatt" as a translation of some pages from an old Chinese manuscript, which is irremediably fragmented. The remainder of the text is missing, its absence represented by two gaping angle brackets "⟨ ⟩" followed by the explanation: "Hier folgen noch einige Seiten, die aber allzu beschädigt sind, als daß ihnen etwas bestimmtes entnommen werden könnte" (KKANI 361). Like the "Piepsen" that creeps into Gregor's voice "from below," this "Schrei der Dohle," once it has penetrated to the centre of the symbolic order, the imperial capital, causes the system of signification itself to collapse, leaving nothing but a fatal misunderstanding. The rest is silence.

This "Schrei der Dohle" famously also forms part of Kafka's semi-private games, in that *kavka* means "jackdaw" in Czech; hence, "Ein altes Blatt" is a "translation" in more ways than one.[35] Like "Samsa" and "Kalda" before it, the jackdaw cry serves as an oblique reference to the name Kafka, and to the animality and alterity of the self. Nothing is more alien and forgotten than one's own body—it is, in Benjamin's phrase, "die vergessenste Fremde" ("Kafka," 431). This is because the λόγος has always sought to disavow the animal body, to escape from it entirely. But inhabit-

[35] Werner Hamacher has explored the far-reaching implications of this "translation" of Kafka's proper name into this deterritorialising nomadic language: "the nomads whose incursion into the Chinese metropolis is recounted in 'An Old Manuscript' are also 'onomads' of Kafka's name. Although they do not carry his name, they act under his law and under the law of the name, the name of the law. For nomads are the bearers of the name 'name.' As *nomeus*, the nomad stands under the *nomos*, the law of the name, *onoma*, and the law as a taking *nemein*. [...] Whenever the name is translated—whether it is the name 'name' or the name 'Kafka'—the jackdaw cry of the nomads interrupts the ordered world of intentions and expropriates the proper name, which is supposed to name and preserve the most proper thing; it makes the proper into an inevitable and unassailable foreigner, and displaces the borders of every class whose function was to secure the singular and specific status of every term in the first place" (312–14).

ing the text also means *embodying* writing, reconnecting it to the physical, animal presence, which, moreover, carries with it all sorts of ancillary noises and parasites—it is, in fact, a multiplicity.

What is this animal presence in language, this "enemy within," other than animetaphor? Traditionally, language has been seen as a house built and inhabited by humans, while animals have resolutely been kept outside its walls. Yet upholding this boundary requires constant vigilance, since the animals are forever finding a way in, in the shape of metaphors, analogies, figures of speech. Once in, they take up residence, leaving a trace that is at once external *and* constitutive, alien *and* fundamental. The animetaphor thus constantly threatens to deterritorialise human language even as it opens it up to new forms of expression. Kafka's zoopoetics in particular relies on granting access to the animal, on allowing it to construct its own meanings within the network of human language, but there is an inherent risk involved in this process. The lingering threat that one day you will wake up from unsettling dreams and instead of finding yourself in your own house, you'll be living in *theirs*.

> [T]he question of the animal is raised *in* and *by* philosophy *for us* [...], but it is also a question *put to us*—individuals and disciplines—*by* animals, with increasing urgency as their disappearance from modern life and extinction from the planet accelerates beyond denial.
>
> —Una Chaudhuri

Conclusion

In an effort to explain the absence of becomings-animal in Kafka's novels, Deleuze and Guattari invite us to imagine *Der Proceß* and *Das Schloß* as dealing with "the bureaucratic world of ants" and "the Castle of the termites," respectively. Instantly, the air of indeterminacy and polysemy that characterises the animal presence in the stories would have given way to an allegory of human relations: "Had he written about the justice of the ants or the castle of the termites, the whole realm of metaphors, realist or symbolist, would have returned" (*Kafka*, 38). Certainly, by and large, the new sorts of animal narratives that emerge after 1900 and which I have been tracking in this dissertation seem to work best in "small" literary forms: in short stories, sketches, and what Andreas Huyssen has termed "modernist miniatures." This is especially clear when a short, polyvalent animal text is transplanted into a larger framework, as is the case with Robert Musil's "Fliegenpapier" (*Nachlaß*, 11–13), which has a close equivalent in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (131). As Isolde Schiffermüller has argued, the shorter, "miniature" form allows for a greater degree of ambiguity and open-endedness, whereas when imbedded in the longer form of the novel the image inevitably becomes an object of reflection and hence an allegory of human experience.

> In der kleinen Prosaskizze aber bleibt seine Bedeutung unbestimmt und offen: die Gebärdensprache der kleinen Form spielt sich auf einer bedeutungsresistenten Schwelle von Sprache und Stummheit ab, an der Menschliches und Nicht-Menschliches, Leben und Tod ihre begrifflichen Grenzen überschreiten und prozeßhaft ineinander übergehen. (Schiffermüller "Zoopoetik," 201)

We might venture the hypothesis that the novel, as the paradigmatically humanist genre, is essentially anthropometric, and therefore necessarily translates all nonhuman presences and relations into metaphors for human experience. This, too, is one of the primary implications of viewing the animal as the "first metaphor": in regarding the animal, and the nonhuman generally, as metaphorical, we assimilate the other into a symbolic order of our own making, forcing the contingent and threateningly alien into a coherent shape that has meaning for *us*.

As Paul Sheehan has noted, in a gloss on Frank Kermode's definition of narrative as "an organization that humanizes time by giving it form": "Narrative [...] is *human-shaped*" (Sheehan *Modernism*, 9, original italics). "Put simply," he continues, "we [humans] tell stories about ourselves to give our lives meaning and purpose, and about our kind to maintain the crucial human/inhuman distinction. This is a twofold process: the mere existence of narrative suggests *difference*, a separation from nature (which does not, needless to say, manifest narrative order); and the kinds of narratives that are produced have supported that separation" (9–10). The larger and more intricately structured the narrative, in other words, the better equipped is it to absorb and assimilate contingency, alterity, and the "other expression" of animetaphors. We saw this in action in Pirandello's *Si gira...*, notably the only novel discussed in this

dissertation,[I] where the symbolically overdetermined *Kosmograph* tiger succeeds in disrupting the diegetic structure of the novel in an explosion of contingency, but is quickly re-assimilated into the narrative through the process of mechanical reproduction.

The anthropometric nature of humanism is also reflected in the academic discourse on modernism and modernity. As a rule, the canonical texts of European literary modernism do not engage centrally with the question of the animal, or have, at the very least, not generally been read with this question in mind. Quite often it seems to have been wilfully suppressed or "explained away" by scholars with a single-minded determination to read everything as a comment on the human condition, from which, moreover, animals are categorically excluded as sentimental and inappropriate for the serious study of great literature. Nor is this by any means limited to modernist literary studies. As the art historian Steve Baker notes with regard to modernist art history as a whole, "the animal comes to be least visible in the discourses which regard themselves as the most serious" (21). Even Franz Marc, who, as we saw in the introduction, was a great proponent of the "Animalisierung der Kunst," eventually embraced abstraction as an expression of "unsre höchst bewußte, thatenheiße Erwiderung und Überwindung des *sentimentalen Geistes*" (Marc 210, original italics). From an art-historical standpoint, Baker writes,

> there was no modern animal, no 'modernist' animal. Between nineteenth-century animal symbolism, with its reasonably secure hold on meaning,

[I] With the exception of Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge*, of course, but that was not the primary focus of the chapter on Rilke. It is striking that neither of these novels employs an omniscient narrator, and that both should take the form of highly subjective "notebooks" (*Aufzeichnungen*/*Quaderni*).

> and the postmodern animal images whose ambiguity or irony or sheer brute presence serves to resist or to displace fixed meanings, lies modernism at its most arid. (20)

Baker is careful to specify that his hypothesis is "essentially art-historical in its emphases," but there is some truth to this claim with regard to literary "high" modernism as well, especially as enshrined in the epoch-making novels of Musil, Proust, and Joyce. Even when, as in the case of Musil's *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten*, these authors funnelled some of their literary genius to the depiction of animals, such works have tended to be considered of incomparably lesser significance. Virginia Woolf herself dismissed her novel *Flush*, an imaginary biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's eponymous cocker spaniel, as "a silly book" and "a waste of time" (*Diary* 29 April 1933, qtd. in Caughie 47). It is also striking that insofar as the radical or "true" modernists engage in zoopoetics at all, the animals in their texts are far more conventional, and far more securely anchored to human structures of meaning, than those in the works by the "last Romantics" such as D. H. Lawrence, Rilke, or Hofmannsthal. To be sure, the four authors considered in this dissertation also have a secure place in the modernist literary canon, but it is nevertheless notable that in pursuing these authors' zoopoetics, I have for the most part been led to focus on more obscure texts, and even there I have generally had to argue against the canonical interpretations, which almost invariably downplay the significance of the literal or metaphorical animals in these texts, and read them allegorically as referring exclusively to some aspect of the human.

The modern animal, Baker concludes, "is thus the nineteenth-century animal (symbolic, sentimental), which has been *made to disappear*" (21–22, original italics).

While this disappearance is unquestionably a trait of "high" modernism, it is also attributable in equal measure to disciplinary structures of knowing and canon-formation that have regarded the question of the animal as fundamentally unserious. In recent years, however, this has begun to change, as the large-scale disappearance of animals from the real world—the fact that here, too, they have been *made to disappear* through human action—has come to be regarded as a serious problem demanding our attention. As I have shown in this dissertation, there is in fact a conspicuous abundance of animals in the literature around 1900, and this profusion of animality was in large part brought about by a crisis of anthropocentrism. Now, a century later, we are, I would argue, in the midst of another, far greater crisis. As we enter the "anthropocene," the first geological era to be defined in terms of the impact of human beings on the planet, it may seem as though the ἄνθρωπος has finally reclaimed the centre, but at the same time it is becoming impossible to justify the traditional humanist view of man as fundamentally separate from nature.

Such structures of human exceptionalism and isolationism continue to haunt debates surrounding literary and linguistic approaches to the nonhuman other. Recently, the widespread interdiction against anthropomorphism, for example, on the basis that it imputes human forms of agency and subjectivity upon animals—that it is, in effect, a form of the "pathetic fallacy"—has come under fire by scholars who point out that the charge of anthropomorphism is in itself based on an Enlightenment, humanist paradigm that views consciousness and agency as the exclusive prov-

ince of the rational human subject.[2] Consider, for example, Daniel C. Dennett's memorable critique of Thomas Nagel's famous question, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" which Dennett considers to be hopelessly anthropomorphic and hence fallacious because it begs the question of whether to be a bat is "to be the sort of thing it is like something to be" (703). While I am only too happy to accept that the question of what it is like to be a bat (or any Other, for that matter, nonhuman or otherwise) may be fundamentally unanswerable, I fail to see why the logical conclusion should then be to assume that being a bat is not *like anything*. Beyond the allegation of anthropomorphism, I wonder if the problem doesn't ultimately lie in the metaphorical structure of the question: in order to be able to say that it is "like" something to be a bat, one must not only ascribe some form of subjective experience to a nonhuman other, one must also consider it possible to encapsulate or at least approximate the nature of that other in language.

It is striking that whilst anthropomorphism is now taken seriously by many scholars, there has so far been no comparable rehabilitation of metaphor, which still seems to carry the stigma of anthropocentrism, and to entail the circumscription of the animal within a human symbolic order that does violence to the absolute alterity

[2] The conspicuous absence of animals within discourses that consider themselves 'serious' is closely linked to the injunction against anthropomorphism as inherently 'unscientific'. As Tom Tyler observes, "It has tended to be those intent on what [George Henry] Lewes called 'scientific seriousness' who have most objected to anthropomorphic language in the discussion of animals" (*Ciferae* 53). The very notion of anthropomorphism, as Tyler notes, makes no sense outside an anthropocentric frame of reference that identifies certain traits or faculties as essentially and principally *human*, as demonstrated by the simple fact that there are no analogous 'morphisms' for other species: in Tyler's example, we do not think of dolphins as "chiropteromorphic" even though they too use echolocation, a trait originally identified only in bats (*Ciferae* 60). Lorraine Daston provides an enlightening history of anthropomorphism and its discontents in her essay "Intelligences: Angelic, Animal, Human."

of the nonhuman Other. But if it is possible—necessary, even—to re-examine the underlying assumptions that cause the pervasive uneasiness surrounding anthropomorphism, why should metaphor be any different, unless we wish to cling to the absolute alterity of the animal other, despite the essentially Cartesian, dualistic conception of the human that such a view must inadvertently support? As I have endeavoured to show, the animal is not "outside the text," either literally or figuratively. Certainly, Nagel's question, just as Franz Marc's before it, is guilty of what Bataille called "the poetic fallacy of animality." As such, it might be deemed insufficiently rigorous by certain analytic philosophers, and inherently naïve and sentimental by certain literary scholars. But as I have argued, such questions are worth asking and worth taking seriously as fundamentally *poetic* questions. The question of language *is*, at a very basic level, synonymous with the question of the animal, and that is why, in order to engage with the latter, the study of literature must engage with the poetics of animality.

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